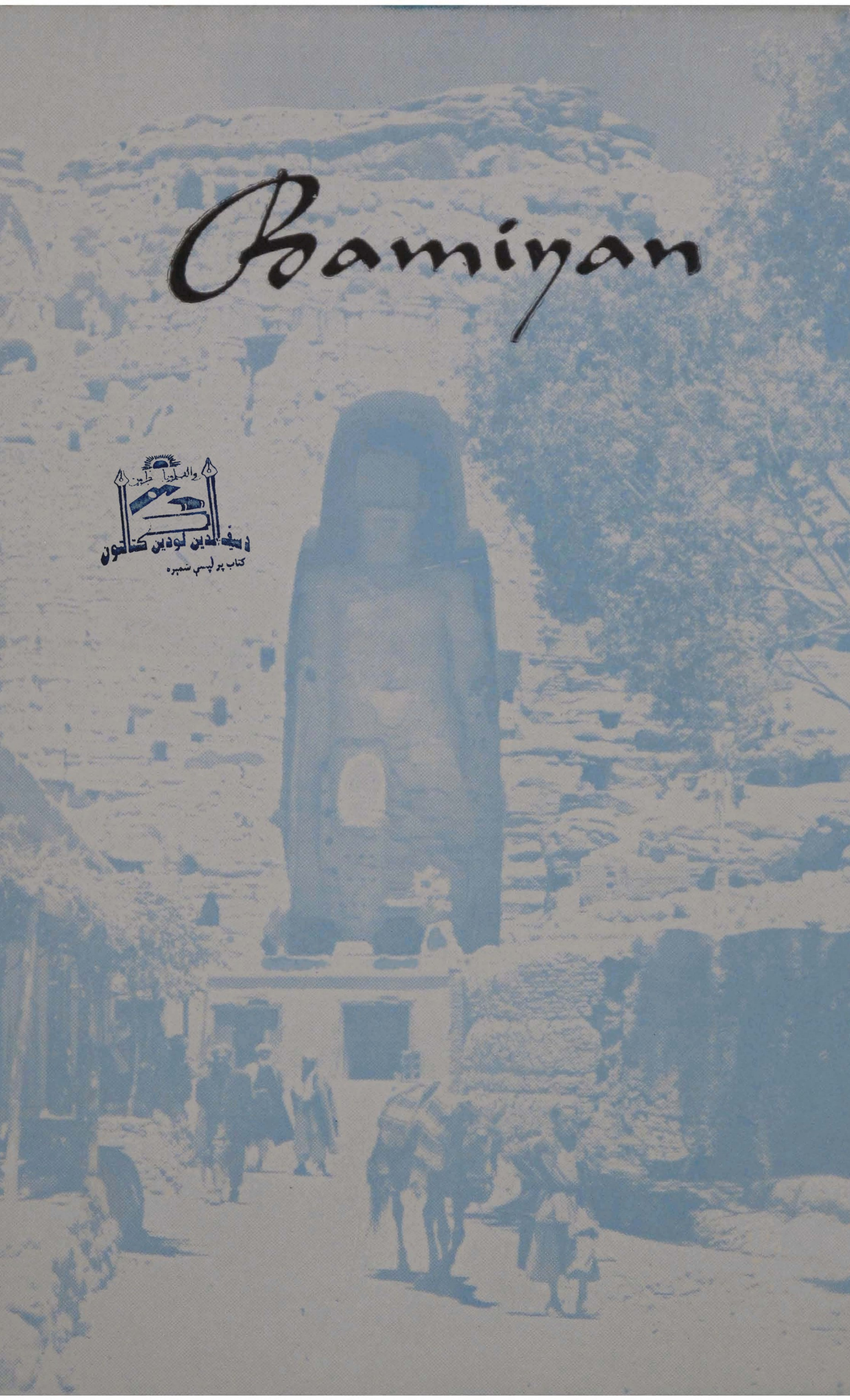
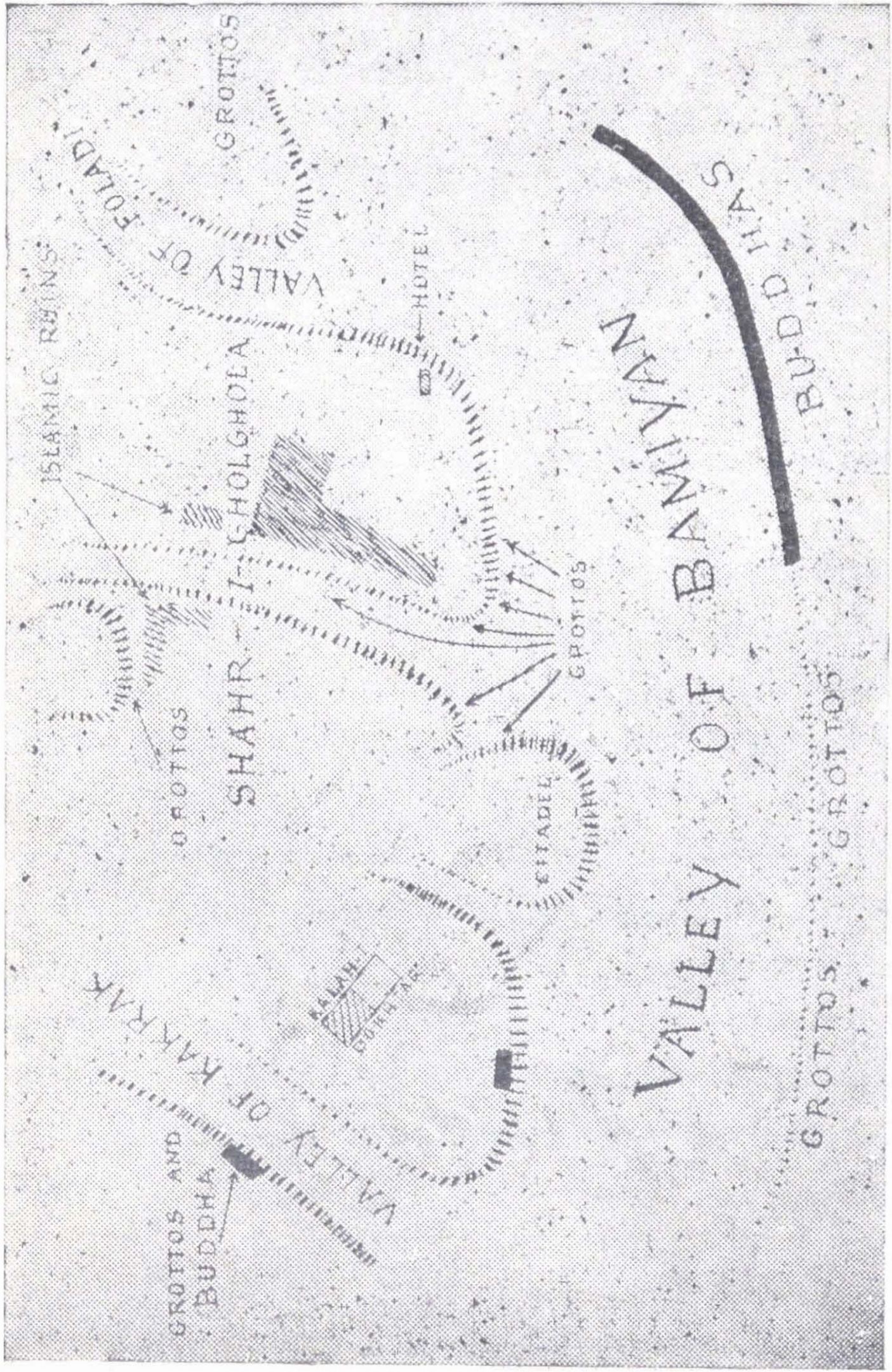


Bamian



First Edition 1963

Second Edition 1967



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(in the first edition)

The preparation of this Guide could never have been undertaken without the encouragement of Mr. Abdul Wahab Tarzi of the Afghan Tourist Organization and M. Le Berre of D. A. F. A. who have continued to offer aid and assurance throughout the project.

Mr. Ahmad Ali Kohzad, Afghanistan's foremost historical scholar, has given unstintingly of his time and knowledge without which I should be most hesitant in presenting this work to the public. Dr. Louis Dupree, an authority on Afghanistan's pre-history and present, has also been most gracious in his advice and direction for which I am most grateful.

Mrs. Janet Marxen and Miss Myra Johnson were undaunted and observant companions during the research period in Bamiyan. I also owe a debt of gratitude to Mrs. Marxen for her artistic sketches which so enhance the chapter on the Buddhist period and to Miss Johnson, without whose contribution of hours of typing, the project must surely have floundered.

Mr. James Cudney, whose beautiful pictures of Afghanistan are admired by all visitors to this country, has been most kind in donating his talent and I am most fortunate to be able to present some of his work in this Guide.

Finally, much gratitude is due to Mr. Robert MacMannin for his professional advice regarding the lay-out and all matters concerning printing about which I was totally ignorant.

Nancy Hatch Wolfe

KABUL

December 1962

FOREWARD

The Afghan Tourist Organization is now pleased to have its second printing of **Bamiyan**. When the first edition of this excellent guide book appeared in 1963 I had expressed my appreciation and gratefulness to the author for the valuable contribution she had made to our tourism development program by producing this much needed guide to Bamiyan. No need to say that the book had tremendous success which was proof of the talent and scholarly approach of the author in the preparation of this work.

Because of her great interest in the history of culture and art of Afghanistan she gave spontaneous response to my later request to write other guide books. **Kabul** came next and then **Herat** each one giving fresh proof of how much she understood Afghanistan. This year the Afghan Tourist Organization is happy to present **The Road To Balkh** and it will be up to the readers to judge the value of this new guide to the northern parts of Afghanistan.

I wish to express to Nancy Dupree my gratitude for filling up one more gap in the path of our tourism development program. Who knows what will be in store when we have the pleasure of seeing the Duprees back in Afghanistan, next year?

A. W. Tarzi

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KABUL - BAMIYAN

Via The SHIBAR PASS

246 Kilometers, 154 miles, approximately 7 hours including a half hour lunch stop. Before the opening of the Salang Highway this was the main highway between Kabul and Mazar-i- Sharif now the traffic is not so heavy. The ascent to the Shibar Pass is quite gradual and for this reason the Shibar route is preferred by some to the precipitous route over the Unai and Hajigak Passes. The road is paved from Kabul to Charikar and Pul-i-Matak, about 75 Kilometers.

Km.O. **Bagh-e-Bala** Amir Abdur Rahman's palace (r. 1880-1901) in which he died, and is now a restaurant, on northwest edge of Kabul. Road forks; left to Paghman and the Kargah Dam, right to Bamiyan.

Km. 6. **Khair Khana Pass**. At the foot and to the right, are the remains of a Buddhist settlement which was active during the V century A. D. Principal find, marble group of a Sun God in a chariot drawn by horses, may be seen

in the Bamiyan room in the Kabul Museum. The Pass leads into the **Koh Daman Valley**. Literally translated, Koh Daman means "Skirts of the Hills", an apt description of this fertile valley and the low ranges which surround the southern approaches to the towering Hindu Kush. Buddhist remains, most unexcavated, can be found throughout the valley from the Khair Khana Pass to its northern limits at Charikar.

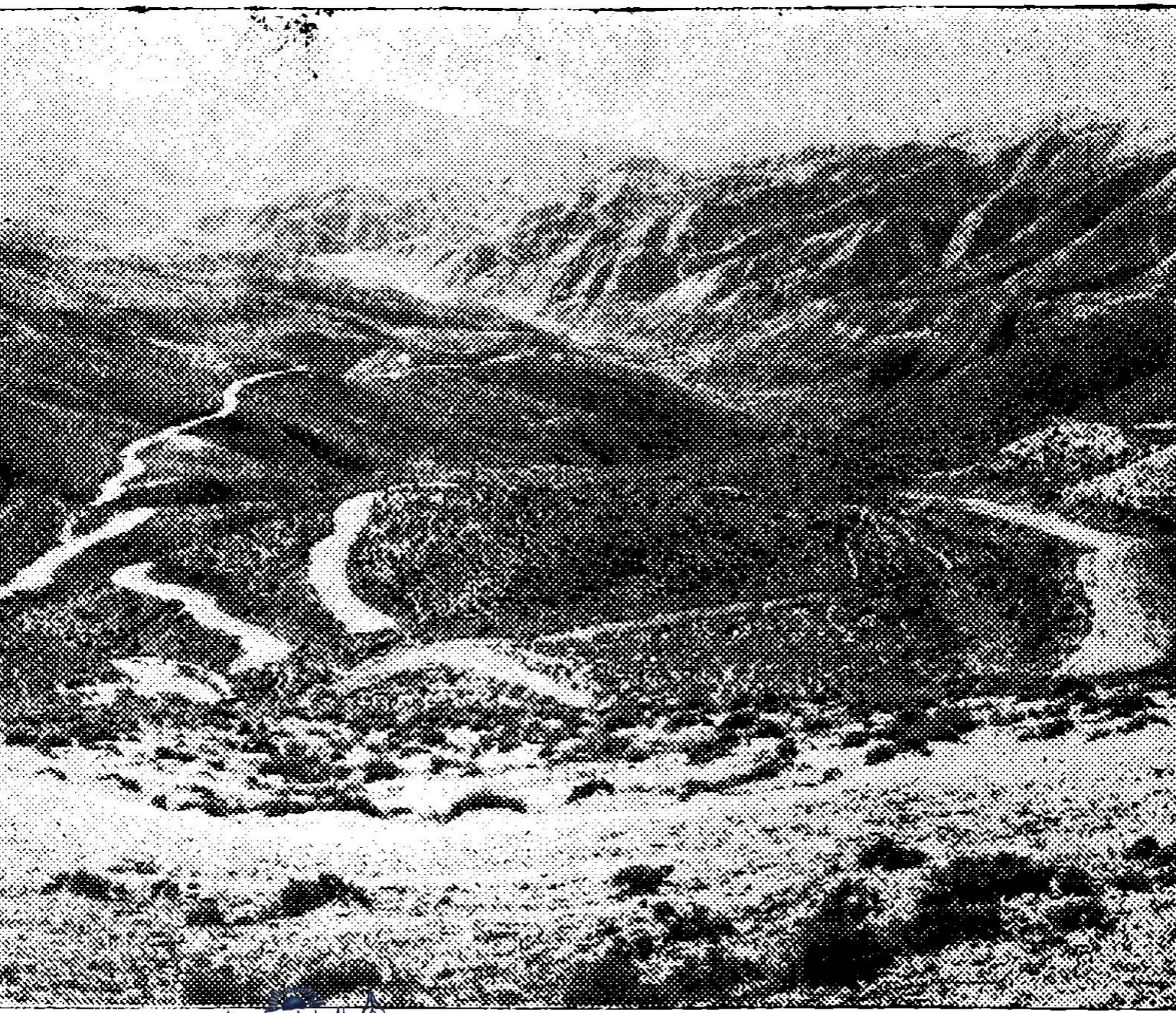
Km. 17. **Kalah Murad-Beg**, village. The trees lining the road here are mulberries.

Km. 30. **Serai Khodja**, administrative center. In the low hills to the right are the ruins of a strong fortress known locally as **Alexaneer's Fort**. It is more likely, however, of Kushan workmanship of the II - III centuries A.D.

Km. 38. Road branching off to the left to the picturesque village of Istalif, famous for its blue pottery and carved wooden chests.

Km. 40 **Qara - Bagh**, village. Note walls with many slits or loopholes. These are the rooms used for drying grapes to make raisins; the many slits provide the necessary circulation of air through the rows of grapes hung on lines. Koh Daman is justly famous for its grapes and raisins.

Km. 47. Road branching off to the right leads to **Bagram Airfield**, in the vicinity of which lie the ruins of



A.S. Asifi

“The mountains are rugged and without vegetation and have a majestic quality about them which is very impressive.”

the ancient Kushan capital of **Kapissa**, artifacts from which may be seen in the Kabul Museum.

Km. 62. **Charikar**, large commercial city, administrative center of Parwan Province. Gas pump.

Three miles (5 Kms.) to the north west lie the ruins of **Hopian**, identified by some as Alexandria-ad-Caucasum where Alexander had his headquarters while in Afghanistan.

Km. 73. **Pul-i-Mattak**, village. The road to the picturesque Ghorband Valley and to Bamiyan branches off to the left. The road from Charikar continues on to Jebel-us-Seraj at the entrance to the Salang Pass. Good bazaar on the roadside in which to buy artistic stone cooking pots.

Km. 87. **Burj-i-Guljan**, Village. Note ruins of caravan serai on left.

Km. 109. **Sia Gird**, village. Islamic ruins to left and right of road. The VII century Buddhist site of Fondukistan lies 3 miles, 5 kms., to the south. Follow the right bank of the Fondukistan River to the village of Fondukistan. Objects have been removed and may be seen in the Kabul Museum. Many decorative motifs parallel to those in Bamiyan though Indian influences predominate over the Sassanian.

Km. 115. **Ghorband Bridge**.

Km. 120. Motorable path to left leads through a forest of poplars, Jungal-i-Char Deh, to the banks of the Ghor-

band River. Magnificent camping and picnicing spot.

Km. 123. Picturesque **Char Deh**, village. Note primitive paintings on walls of tea houses.

Km. 147. **Sheikh Ali**, village.

Km. 154. **Deh Nirkh**, village.

Km. 167. Very attractive Budian Valley, leads into the **Taidu-Kul Gorge**. Note stupa perched on cliff on right midway through gorge.

Km. 176. Beginning of ascent to top of Shibar Pass. (9240 ft.). Watershed of the Indus and Oxus River basins.

Km. 192. **Shumbol Gorge**.

Km. 200. **Bololah Gorge**. Very fine example of a fortified village on the right.

Km. 203. **Bololah** village.

Km. 209. Road forks; left to Bamiyan, right through Shikari Gorge past **Sar Khoshak**, Doab, where the road to Doshi bifurcates for Ajar valley, and finally to where it joins the main asphalt road to the north. Note ruins of look-out tower on spur to left. Road to Bamiyan follows the Bamiyan River.

Km. 229. Bamiyan River meets the Kalu River. Junction with alternate route from Kabul. On top of the red cliff to the left is **Shahr -i- Zohak (Red City)**.

Km. 246. Gas pump, **Bamiyan**. Just beyond the pump, on the left, a lovely tree-lined road winds up to the top of the plateau and the local administration buildings, to

the **Bamiyan Hotel**.

Shahr -i- Gholghola (Silent City) may be seen on a conical hill to the left as the road nears the top of the plateau.

[1/5/11]

KABUL - BAMIIYAN

Via The

UNAI AND HAJIGAK PASSES

180 kilometers, 112 miles, approximately 6 hours including a half hour stop for lunch. The road, rugged and precipitous, is in very good condition, has little traffic and is more impressive than the route via the Shibar pass. It is not recommended after heavy rains as there are a number of fords and during the winter it is well to check the condition of the passes.

Km. 0. **Kotai Sangi** gas station on the southwest edge of Kabul where the new road to Paghman and Kandahar begins turn to the Kandahar road.

Km. 21 - **Ski Lodge** on hillside to left.

Km. 32 - Road to Bamiyan branches to right. This is the road to **Maidan**. (The main road continues on to Ghazni.) Enter the **Jalres Valley**.

Km. 57. Picturesque tomb on right with many colourful pennants of kerchiefs donated by women asking the intervention of the saint for illnesses of their children. Tree-lined road follows lovely clear stream.

Km. 75. **Sarchashma** (fountainhead) of Kabul River

gushing from underneath a rock. The village has a Shrine and sacred fish pond.

Km. 77. Entrance to the **Unai Pass**. In the spring and fall one meets large, colourful caravans with long lines of camels, donkeys, and sheep. The mountains are rugged and without vegetation and have a majestic quality about them which is very impressive.

Km. 93 Top of Unai Pass (10330 ft).

Km. 103. Take road to right for Bamiyan.

Km. 109. **Gardandiwal**. Take road to right across river for Bamiyan. Nice tea house. Source of the Helmand River. Entrance into the **Koh-i- Baba** mountains which begin here and extend 125 miles towards the west.

Km. 128. Beginning of the **Hajigak Pass**. Km. 133- Top of Hajigak Pass 3250 m (10665 ft) reached by a very steep road with many hairpin bends.

Km. 145. Scenic **Kalu Valley**, road runs along bank of the Kalu River passing small villages and homes sheltered by groves of poplar trees.

Km. - 156. **Pai Mori Gorge**. Note ruins of look-out towers on right,.

Km. 157. **Bridge**. On right just before crossing the bridge is a warm mineral spring bubbling from the rocks on the top of the ravine.

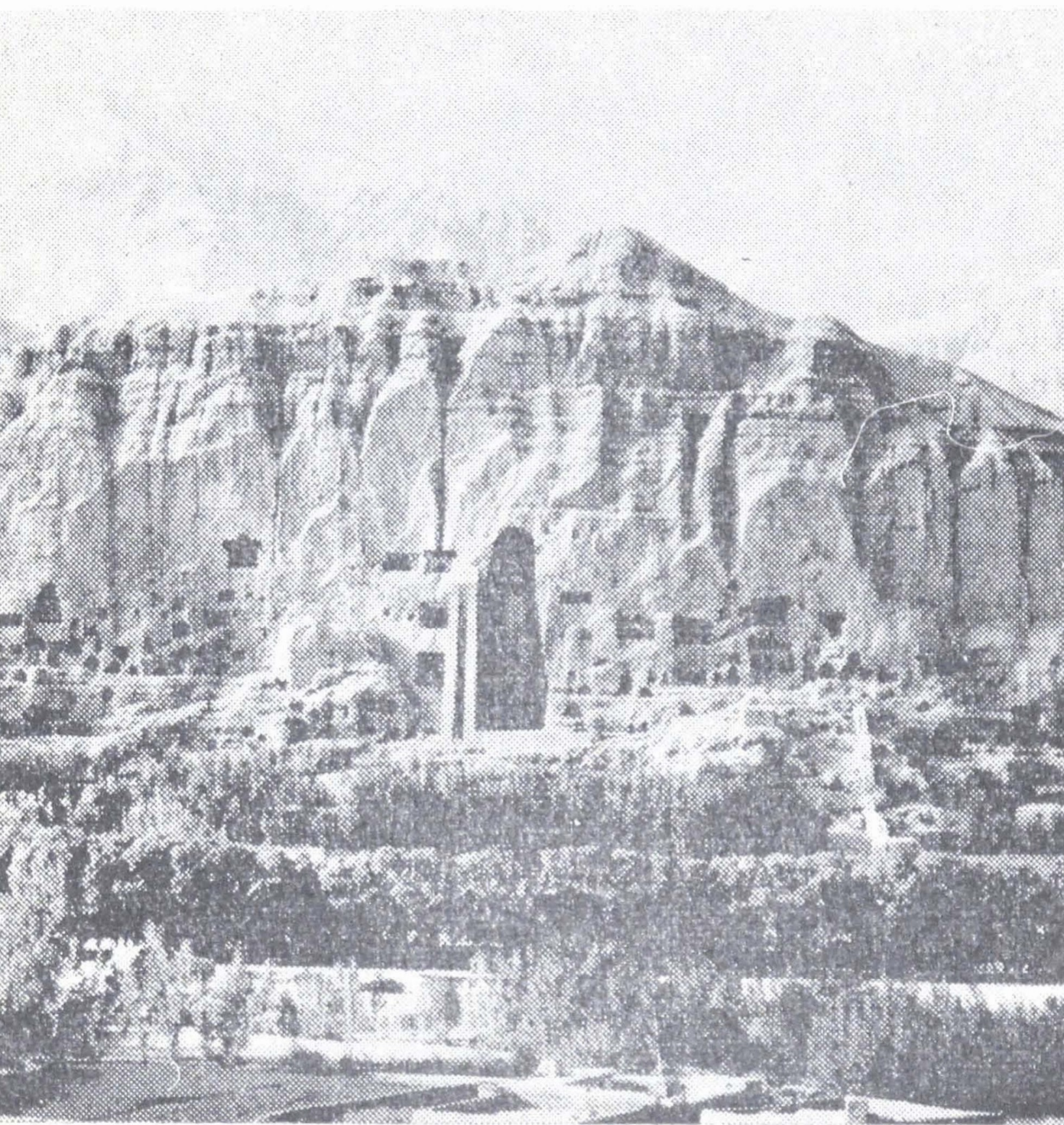
Km. 163. Bridge at confluence of Kalu and Bamiyan Rivers. To the left on the side of the red cliff note towers

marking the entrance to **Shar - i - Zohak (Red City)** .

The route now joins the alternate route from Kabul via the Shibar Pass just beyond the bridge. Turn left at the junction. A good view of Shahr-i-Zohak may be had just beyond the junction, to the left on top of cliff. Note the three stages.

Km. 180. **Bamiyan**. Gas Pump. Just beyond the pump, on the left, a lovely three-lined road winds up to the top of the plateau and the local administration buildings, to the Bamiyan Hotel.

Shar - i - Gholghla (Silent City) seen on a conical hill to the left as the road nears the top of the plateau.



A.S. Asif

“Nestled within the folds of the awesome Hindu-Kush
is a narrow beautiful valley.”

HISTORY OF A VALLEY

“Nestled within the folds of the awesome Hindu Kush is a narrow beautiful valley. Fortuitously placed, it gave haven to merchants, pilgrims and savants of the ancient world, thus amassing wealth, fame and power. Secluded in its mountain fortress, it was witness to, but rarely the victim of, the constant upheavals of power replacing power in the lowlands below. Serene, it inspired an efflorescence of a profound religion which it radiated to the Eastern world.”

This was, and is, Bamiyan.

Just what its beginnings were are lost in the mists of time but it seems fairly certain that Bamiyan was not founded by Alexander the Great, a distinction claimed by so many towns in Afghanistan. There can be no doubt, however, that Alexander's military conquests from 334-327 B. C. exercised a powerful influence on this area for it was through them that Hellenism was carried into the highlands of Central Afghanistan.

Although the Greek settlements in Afghanistan were concentrated mainly in the lowlands south of the Oxus

and north of the Hindu Kush, in Bactria with its capital in Balkh, it is essential to point out two important facts. First, Alexander left relatively few people behind him; administrators and soldiers who, by the second generation, had been absorbed into the fabric of life in the local area. Also, one of the facets of Alexander's genius that distinguishes him from the ordinary conqueror is that he firmly believed in encouraging the cultural heritages of the countries he subdued. He opened avenues to a vigorous culture by which dynamic ideas flowed to this new world where they were eagerly adopted. The result of this fusion was a Greco - Bactrian, not a purely Greek, culture and it is this essentially indigenous culture we shall see evidence of in Bamiyan.

We have yet to touch upon developments in Bamiyan itself for the simple reason that we do not in fact know what was happening there. We turn instead to the south where North India had been unified under the Maurya Dynasty which eventually extended its boundaries westward until halted by the Hindu Kush. This in itself had little importance for Bamiyan, but in 260 B. C. the dynasty's most renowned ruler, Asoka, was converted to Buddhism. Asoka's missionary zeal was astounding and evidence of it has been found near Kandahar in southern Afghanistan in the form of a rock inscription dated 250 B. C. We have then, two outstanding cultural movements unfolding, one

north, one south, with the mountains sheltering Bamiyan between.

We must turn again to the north where restless nomadic tribes from Central Asia broke the Greco-Bactrian hold on Bactria. The first to come c.135 B. C. were the Sakas, soon replaced by the Yueh-chih who, under the leadership of their principal tribe, the Kushans, were to write a brilliant page of history.

Being nomads they had no established practices to govern a settled life, so they took over the Greco-Bactrian institutions of their predecessors. In this they prospered and by the time of their most noted ruler, Kanishka, variously placed between 78 and 144 A. D., the Kushan Empire extended from Benares in India to the Gobi Desert. Kanishka ruled his empire from Kapissa, not far from modern Charikar. For the first time the Hindu Kush ceased to stand as a dividing line and became a veritable vortex instead.

It is necessary to examine the wider history of this period to appreciate what this means. Consider the power inherent in an empire the size of the Kushan Empire itself. Then look to the west where Rome is building its great empire. then to the East and the glorious court of the Han Dynasty. And finally, to the South to the riches of India. To be the very center of all this was to be favoured indeed.

What little is known about Kanishka shows him to have

been one of the great men of all time, superbly able to take full advantage of the forces that surrounded him. Not only an astute ruler, he was also a patron of the arts and a zealous patron of religion, including Buddhism. Using the wealth and power of his empire to serve these interests, he gave the world a heritage it still enjoys. Immensely rich caravans in ever-increasing numbers moved both east and west across the north. From the Roman empire they brought gold and silver plates, woolen and linen textiles, topaz, coral, amber, frankincense, glass vessel, and wine; from Central Asia and China rubies, furs, gums, drugs, raw silk and embroidered silks and many spices.

On reaching Balkh many turned south, bringing treasure to Kapissa, examples of which may be seen in the Kabul Museum today. From there they pushed on to the south to Kanishka's thriving winter capital, Peshawar, the gateway to the sub-continent.

The way from Balkh to Kapissa and Peshawar was long and arduous. Situated halfway between, Bamiyan must always have offered haven to travellers after their rugged trip over the Hindu Kush but now it became more than a mere caravan serai (1). It became a meeting place of ideas, a renowned center of culture. The reason for this lay in the fact that the caravans carried not only goods, but men. Artists, philosophers, and men of science were attracted

(1) *Road-side Inn with courtyard for animals.*

from one center to another. Most especially, the missionaries of Buddhism, encouraged by Kainshka and his successors, spread northward. They met in Bamiyan.

There may have been Buddhists in Bamiyan before this time, we cannot be certain. Certainly now the peacefulness and beauty of the valley appealed to these men of meditation and Buddhist installations soon sprang up. M. Foucher, the first archaeologist to start a systematic study of the valley, so aptly points out that the high smooth pastel cliffs faced across a narrow valley by a plateau simply called for pick and chisel with which to exemplify, in grand proportions, the magnitude of the ultimate Idea. It is generally agreed that the colossal figures date from this period; the 120 foot Buddha between the II - III centuries A.D., and the 175 foot Buddha from the III-IV centuries. Surrounding them a vast religious complex grew and close by, at the entrance to the Folangi Valley, a bustling city served the commercial needs of caravan and convent.

To know the exact date of the Buddhas is relatively unimportant. What is important is that they are sculptural representations of the historical movements discussed above. Here in the drapery of these figures one recognizes classic Greek folds, modified by local and Roman treatment, clothing the Buddha figure. South has met north in this valley and the resulting fusion was to conquer the art and mind of Central Asia and the East.

Bamiyan kept the preeminence she acquired during the Kushan Dynasty even though empires now crashed and disintegrated all around her. The first momentous change occurred during the middle of the third century when the Sassanians of Iran defeated the Kushan Dynasty and acquired Bamiyan as part of their new possessions. Bamiyan soon regained a semi-independent status, however, and only nominally recognized Sassanian rule. For example, although Zoroastrianism was revived by the Sassanians and the new empire was supported by a powerful priesthood, Buddhism continued to thrive there. We know this to be still true even a hundred and fifty years later for we are fortunate enough to have the account of a Chinese pilgrim, Fa Hsien, who passed through Bamiyan c. 400 A.D. He speaks of over a thousand monks in attendance there and describes in detail an assembly of monks held with great ceremony.

Although holding to its ancient religion, there is abundant evidence that Sassanian art was received with favour in the valley. Sassanian figures, dress and symbols are all depicted with skill, but, as was the case with the Greco-Bactrian techniques, this is Sassanian art in the service of Buddhism. As such it is truly of the valley and no mere importation.

But while the inhabitants of this valley pursued their peaceful way, a new wave of invaders, the Hephthalites,

surged into this country from the restless plains of Central Asia.

The story of the Hephthalites in Eastern Iran, Afghanistan and Northern India is one of savage fury. It began c. 425 when they appeared out of the north and lasted for a century until, c.565, a coalition of Sassanians and Turks on the one hand and the revolt of the Gupta armies in India on the other, successfully annihilated them. During these years the Hephthalites exterminated Buddhism in its holy land of Gandhara in the Kabul, Swat and Peshawar valleys where it was subsequently replaced by the Hindu religion championed by the Gupta Dynasty (c.320-535). Bamiyan, secure in its pocket in the Hindu Kush, escaped the vengeance of the Hephthalites. But the advent of the Hindu Guptas in the Indus valley was to leave its mark. Mirrored in the Bamiyan frescoes, in certain elements of figure, dress, and attitude, are many characteristics of Gupta art. The tradition of synthesis, of utilizing new art forms in a distinctive local manner, was still strong in Bamiyan.

After the Hephthalites were defeated the area of modern Afghanistan was divided into provinces again under Sassanian rule governed by Hephthalite satraps in the north and Kushan satraps in the south. At Bamiyan, Buddhism, destroyed elsewhere, continued to flourish.

For this we have proof, once more in the account of a

Chinese traveller, Hsuen tsung. He visited the court of Bamiyan for several days in 632 and in his account he discusses the very devoted religious character of its inhabitants, describes the same ceremony witnessed by Fa Hsien two hundred years earlier and remarks on the magnificence of its statues. These accounts, plus his count of ten convents and one thousand priests, attest to its continued vitality.

As one stands on the plateau overlooking these cliffs and recalls the writings of these early travellers, one cannot but be overwhelmed by the emotional impact this valley, in all its splendour, must have made on the devoted pilgrims who walked from China to see it.

The year Hsuen-tsung was in Bamiyan was also the year of the Prophet Mohammed's death. It is a long way from this mountain valley to the Arabian desert and it would take many a year, but forces that were eventually to eliminate Bamiyan as a religious center had now been set in motion. Fired by fresh religious zeal and spurred on by the success of conquest, the Arabs overran the Sassanians and defeated them decisively in 641. The first significant Arab push into Afghanistan was made through the Kandahar area in 699-700 A. D. when the Kabul king, a Kushan, was defeated and thereafter he and other local rulers ruled under the watchful eye of Arab military governors. Bamiyan may have been thus politically affected



A.S. Asi

“To the fusion of Greco-Roman art and Buddhist
thought we owe the existence of the Buddha figure and
the cult of the colossal.

but the religious life of the valley was apparently unaffected

The reason for this assumption comes again from the accounts of a traveller from the East, this time a Korean monk, Hui-ch'ao, making his way from India through the Hindu Kush c. 827. His story indicates that though the Arabs had subdued the Sassanians they had not cared to venture into the icy heights of the unfamiliar mountains, for he says, the king of Bamiyan was still a Buddhist. What is more, he indicates that this king had considerable power and was feared by his neighbors. The authority of Bamiyan, lived on in the mountains.

We must now drop the curtain once again over Bamiyan, for no one knows exactly what happened here during the next two hundred years. During this time the Arabs lost their eastern provinces to a succession of western Turkic dynasties which came and went as suzerains of ancient Bactria. The most significant fact about them for our purposes is that they were forceful bearers of Islam. Then in the tenth century, c.970, the curtain rises once again on Bamiyan with a dramatic scene recorded in detail. Alptagin, the Turkish governor of Balkh, having just broken relations with his Samanid masters at the court of Bokhara, marched south towards the petty fief of Ghazni taking with him his slave Soboktagin. Their march across the Hindu Kush being arrested by the King of Bamiyan, Alptagin ordered Soboktagin to advance with 500 soldiers

which he did, leaving 400 in a narrow gorge. Thus when Soboktagin appeared before the enemy with only 100 men behind him the King of Bamiyan thought he was menaced by a small raiding party and attacked at once. Soboktagin retreated. Following, the King and his party were led into the gorge where his soldiers were cut to pieces and the King himself was taken prisoner.

From these contemporary accounts we learn that Buddhism was still practiced in Bamiyan at this time and that non-Muslim dynasties also reigned at Kabul and at Ghazni. Kings of Bamiyan had been converted to Islam before this, probably on numerous occasions, but the power of the Buddhist beliefs was so strong that once the dangers presented by the foreigners passed by they reverted to their traditional ways of worship. This process was aided, of course, by the fact that passing conquerors never stayed in these rugged mountains for very long themselves but departed leaving local chiefs, virtually independent, as vassals.

In fact it is not until the time of the Ghaznavid Dynasty, founded by this same Soboktagin, that Islam was propagated generally and permanently throughout Afghanistan. The Arabs had come over three and a half centuries before, the people of the north had embraced the new religion two and a half centuries before, but in the fastness of the mountains the city of Buddhism was slow to give up

the beliefs which it had once radiated throughout the world. Now, in the 11th century, Buddhism was gone from the valley.

From now on the future of Bamiyan follows the fortunes of various Islamic dynasties. After burning Ghazni in 1140 a Turkish king from the independent kingdom of Ghor in the mountains to the west took possession of Bamiyan, leaving it in charge of his brother Fakhruddin Masud, and with him we find Bamiyan, once again the center of a strong dynasty, the Shansabanid, and once again the center of a powerful and far-flung kingdom. In their early days the Shansabanids ruled the territory comprising the modern provinces of Mazar-i-Sharif, Katagan and Badakhan and later they expanded their authority to include Balkh and territories to the north of the Oxus River. Its fortunes grew and c.1200 the second king of the Shansabanids, in token of the major part the troops of Bamiyan played in a battle against their powerful neighbor in the northwest, was given the title of Sultan and the privilege of riding beneath a black parasol, the symbol of a mighty king.

Under the third king of this dynasty, the kingdom of Bamiyan extended its borders even further and at its capital in Bamiyan the great savants, poets, theologians and historians of their day met. The Shansabanid dynasty was short lived, however, and its fourth ruler succumbed to a

coup instigated by a neighboring king of Khwarizm who, after a series of intrigues worthy of any storyteller of oriental fables, annexed Ghazni, from where he returned to Bamiyan with two hundred and fifty camel loads of gold, silver, and precious stones. The Khwarizm had seized a kingdom both wealthy and powerful which they continued to rule from the valley of Bamiyan. The city (2), now situated on the plateau across from the silent Buddhas, was well-fortified within lofty walls and well protected by fortresses at strategic points throughout the valley. Among these were Shahr-i-Zohak (3) only ten miles to the east and Sar Khoshak 21 miles to the northeast, both commanding the major northsouth route where the peoples of the world still passed.

For 1200 years now, Bamiyan had ruled this route, rarely adversely affected by the swirling changes that dashed against her mountains, often in a blaze of brilliant glory. But a great tide from the northeast was once again approaching and this one was to inundate her forever. This was the Mnongol horde. It has been said that Genghis Khan himself had not intended to visit Bamiyan, sending instead his young grand-son to lay seige to the fortress of Shahr-i-Zohak in 1222. Unfortunately for the future of Bamiyan, the young boy was killed by the defenders of

(2) *Today known as Shahr-i- Gholghola*

(3) *Also called the Red City.*

that fortress, so enraging Genghis Khan that he vowed he would put to death every living soul within the valley man, woman, child and animal. True to his promise he came, devastated and vanished leaving nothing but silence behind him.

And so it remained. Nomads took shelter in the caves as time went by, the waters of its rivers and the beauty of its vales attracted others and soon small villages grew. Perhaps Bamiyan would once again have risen to prominence but it was never given the chance; and even greater catastrophe than invasion came in the form of sea routes which robbed the land routes of their cargo, and the cities of the desert and the mountain of their reason for being.

THE COLOSSAL BUDDHAS and the MONASTIC GROTTOS

To reach the colossal Buddhas, turn left at the end of the road from the Hotel; in the middle of the village of Bamiyan a sign on the right directs you to the site. The road brings you first to the larger of the two Buddhas. Proceed past a mosque on the left to reach the small Buddha half a mile further east. Binoculars and a flashlight are highly recommended. Carry as little as possible when climbing the niche of the small Buddha as you will need both hands.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The best view of the Buddhist site in its entirety may be seen from the terrace of the Bamiyan Hotel. Midst this vast honey - combed network of caves the small 120 foot (35meters) Buddha stands almost directly ahead. The grottos you will visit are: B and A, half way up the east side of the niche; A1, east and slightly above A; B1, above B; C

and C1, directly to the west of the top of the niche; D, directly below C.

Following the cliff toward the west one can see three rounded niches, each with its own series of grottos, which originally sheltered seated Buddhas. Although tantalizing glimpses of interesting paintings can be seen on the summits of these vaults there is at present no access to them.

Finally, almost at the western extremity of the cliff there is the large 175 foot (53 meters) Buddha. Above and behind this niche, seemingly on a separate cliff, you can see Grottos XIII and XIV and the grotto with the Lantern Roof.

When Buddhism first entered the valley the religious center was situated on the plain before the cliff as the remains of a large stupa to the east of the small Buddha attest. It was probably during the time of Kanishka and his successors (1-111 century) that the complicated system of monastic caves was begun and embellishment continued through the VII century.

In order to envision this view as it was during the days of its greatest splendor one must imagine the facades of all the caves painted in rich polychromatic hues enhanced by sculptured figures, also painted. The colossal figures were coloured and glistening with ornaments the smaller in blue, the larger in red, faces and hands gilded. In addition, there were stupas and buildings all along the base of

the cliff, such as the king's monastery mentioned by Hsuen-tsung which were certainly gayly bedecked with banners and canopies as depicted in the wall paintings of Kakrak.

Both the facades and the buildings have been buried under the crumbling face of the cliff. A very vivid example of this can be seen at the small Buddha where the western side of the niche is held in place only by a buttress.

ART TRENDS

Space permits only a cursory discussion of art trends at Bamiyan. There are borrowings from three major sources: Greco-Roman art as it was developed in Gandhara under the Kushans, Indian art as it was developed under the Guptas, and Iranian art as it was developed under the Sassanians.

The Kushans exchanged diplomatic embassies with Rome and artists returned with them from throughout the empire to work at Gandhara in adapting art forms to serve Buddhism. From this joint effort the Buddha figure was born, the most significant contribution of the Gandharan school to art. Prior to this the followers of early Buddhism, known as Hinayana or the Lesser Vehicle, only permitted symbolic representations of the Buddha. Circa 100 A. D., however, Mahayana Buddhism or the Greater Vehicle, which stressed the miraculous life and personality of the Buddha, gained prominence. This led to a

desire for a Buddha figure and the Roman artists with their classical hellenistic background arrived just at this time to give form to the desire.

Hsuen-tsung tells us that in 632 the people of Bamiyan were still following Hinayana tenets but that they were of the Lokottaravadin sect which held that the Buddha was more than mortal. It was no doubt this belief coupled with the influence of the Roman cult deifying the emperor, as represented by the giant statues of Nero and Constantine, which brought forth in the II and III centuries the colossal statues of Bamiyan symbolizing the universality of the Buddha as equivalent to the cosmos itself.

So, to the fusion of Greco - Roman art and Buddhist thought we owe the existence of the Buddha figure and the cult of the colossal. Other details and motifs derived from the classical art will be pointed out in specific instances below. We turn next to India during the time of the Guptas in the IV-early VI centuries. They assimilated Hindu motifs and forms and fused them with the spirit of Gandharan art thereby creating new canons of beauty which are best known as they were applied to the wall paintings of the V century at Ajanta in Central India. The new canons indianized forms and costumes and introduced a gracefulness bordering on the sensual.

It seems most likely that the Sassanian art represented at Bamiyan dates from the late VI or early VII centuries

although the whole question of dating is still under debate. There are remarkable resemblances between certain motifs in the paintings in the small Buddha complex and coins struck by a Hephthalite vassal prince, Sri Vasudeva (592-627), as well as very apparent borrowings from the rock sculptures in Iran of this period. The diadem with crescent headdress, for instance, is that used by the later Sassanian kings and differs significantly from that in vogue during earlier centuries and the boar's head was most popular with Khosru II whom Sri Vasudeva served. Therefore, it would seem logical that the paintings were dedicated by this prince though this does not of course preclude the possibility that some may have been executed at an earlier date.

Many factors lead to the conclusion, however, that all the paintings were done by artists from India and Iran working together. In A, one wall is clearly Sassanian, the other Indian. In C, Sassanian paintings are framed by sculptured representations of revetments from Gandharan stupas. On the niche of the large Buddha the summit of the vault is Indian, the side walls Sassanian.

Then in Kakrak which is of much later date, perhaps of the VIII-IX centuries, we find only one style which though clearly evolved from earlier borrowings, is so distinctive that it is known as the Kushano-Sassanian school. Here one finds the earliest examples of the mystic diagrams

essential to Esoteric Buddhism as it is now practiced in Tibet and Japan.

THE 120 FOOT BUDDHA COMPLEX

This figure was carved from the cliff after which it was covered with a coating of mud mixed with straw on which the drapery of a monastic cloak covering both shoulders was modeled over a wooden armature. It was afterwards painted, as traces of blue paint still visible under the right shoulder show. The face is mutilated and the hands are missing. Throughout the visit you will notice that almost every face, sculptured or painted, has been destroyed. This was done by the followers of monotheistic Islam because of their abhorance of idols.

The heavy proportions, rigidly frontal position of body and the rendition of the drapery are in accord with the artistic forms developed by the artists of Gandhara in their fusion of Greco-Roman forms with Indian concepts. The realistic and personalized portrayal of body and drapery characteristic of Hellenistic art is schematized to conform to the Indian concepts of the immaterial and spiritual qualities of the Buddha. Comparable datable sculpture from Gandhara in the same style leads one to believe that this figure was begun during the II century and probably completed in the III.

The parabolic niche in which the figure stands was originally covered with paintings of which there are still vestiges overhead. It is interesting to consider the extreme difficulty of painting the niche; even from the head neither the soffit nor the sides can be reached. Long hollowed-out recesses in the floor of the gallery that passes behind the head have been identified as having once held the beams of a scaffold on which workmen and artists perched.

The detail of the painting will be discussed from the vantage point of the gallery but the general pattern can be seen from the foot. Directly above the head of the statue, on the summit of the vault, a large figure ringed by a fiery halo rides a chariot drawn by four winged-horses. On either side are rows of donors arranged as spectators behind a balustrade framing the central composition.

GROTTOS

Before archaeological work was carried out at the site, a great many of the grottos were inhabited by the Hazara tribesmen of the valley and the interiors subsequently became coated with thick layers of soot. Many of the grottos are still inhabited today but where important decoration has been found families have been evicted and the soot painstakingly removed. Most of these painted caves are in the small Buddha complex.

From the front of the small Buddha a path leads toward

the east up a slight incline and then doubles back toward an entrance into the cliff. Though one starts the climb up a modern staircase it soon joins the original staircase. One authority has advanced the theory that this staircase and a similar one at the large Buddha, were built not only for convenience in visiting the various grottos but also to enable priests and worshippers to perform the rite of circumambulation.

The grottos are arranged in a series of communicating units or groups, each of which consists of several rooms : one or two vestibules, an assembly hall for pilgrims, a sanctuary for worship, and one or more monastic cells to accommodate the monks in attendance.

GROTTO G (4)

At the foot of the cliff to the east of the small Buddha, the archaeologists discovered a small, square room with a vaulted cupola resting directly upon a series of arcs in each corner forming trumpet-like squinches. This elegant device was used as a transition unit between the quadrangle of the walls and the oval of the cupola and is a popular motif used throughout at Bamiyan. Grotto G is, in fact, the archetype of a series of grottos such as A and B. On the side walls there were polychrome statues of Buddhas, Bod-

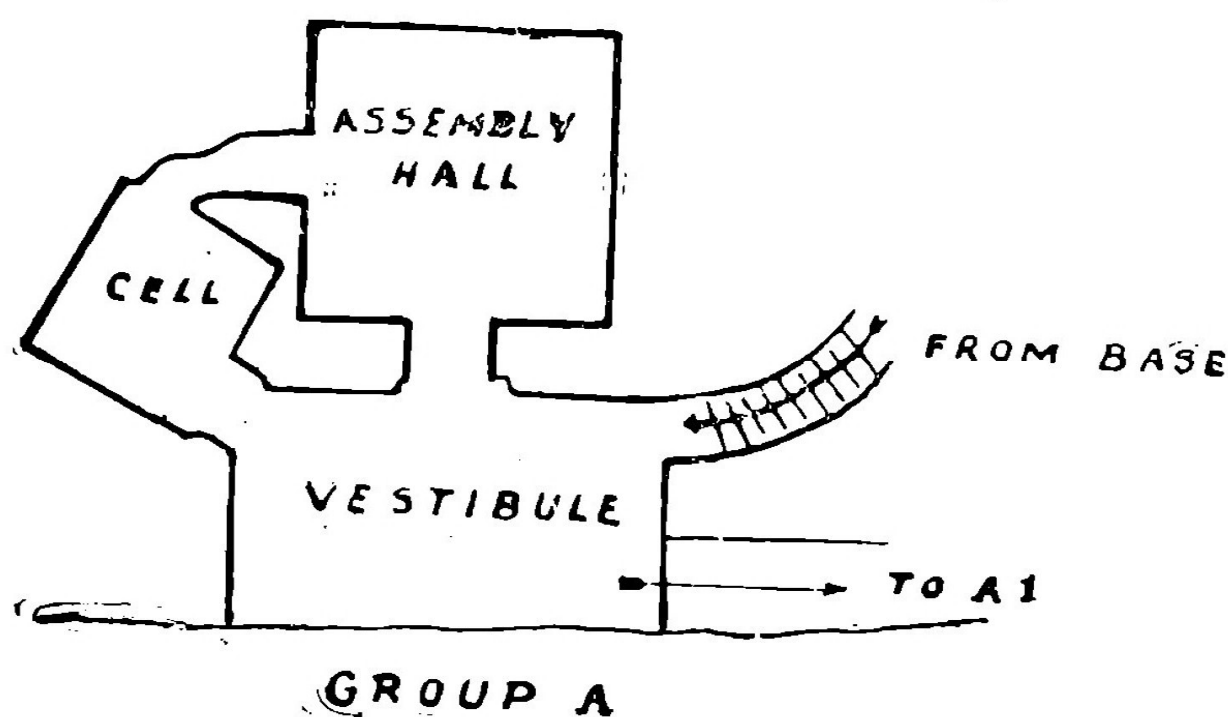
(4) *The numbering of the grottos follows the system of the original archaeological reports by D. A. F. A.*

hisattvas, and donors simply modeled in clay over wooden armatures. The ceiling and the stupa in the center of the room were covered with paintings which reflected many very early Hellenistic influences in style and iconography. This, plus the fact that none of the Indian and Sassanian indicators were present lead to the supposition that this must have been a very early cave dating from, or even before, the III century A.D. Nothing remains at the site as most of the paintings disappeared two hours after they were exposed, but three stucco heads and a fragment of the stupa dome may be seen in the Kabul Museum.

GROUP A

The stairway leads directly to the vestibule of Group A which is a simple group consisting only of a vestibule, an assembly hall, and one cell.

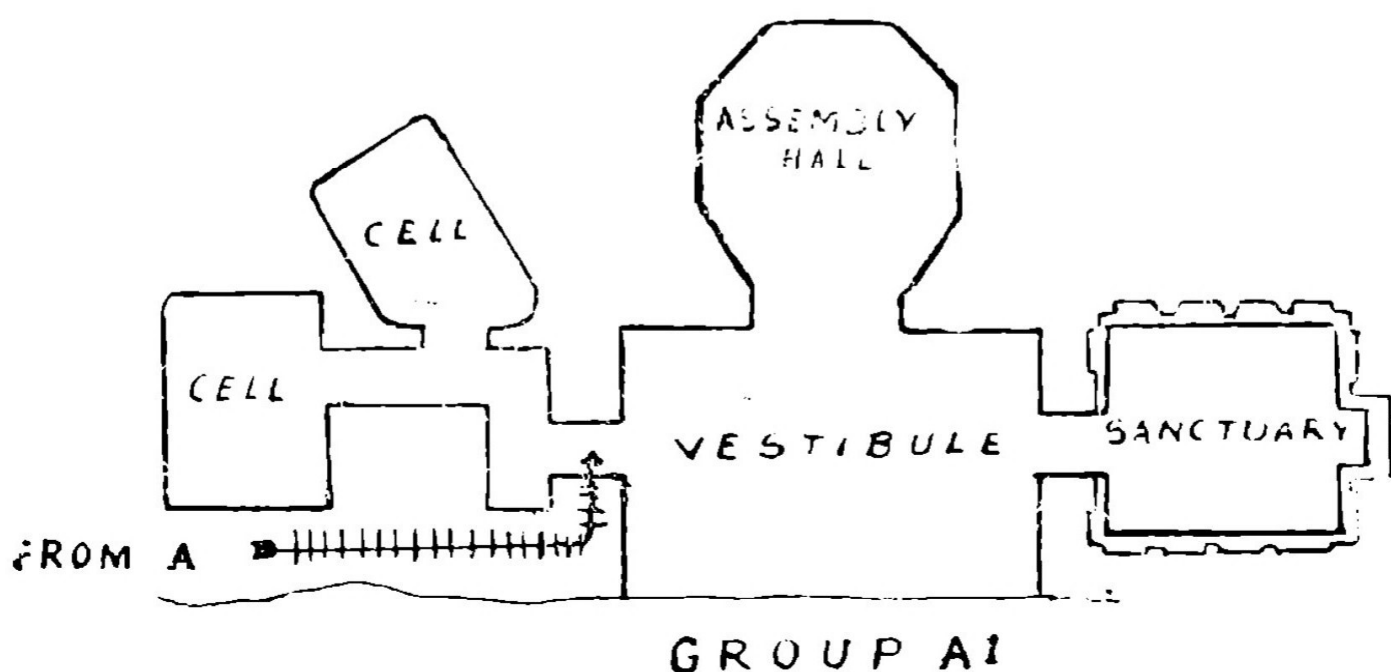
Facing the door on the north wall of the assembly hall, above a banquette, is a large painted seated Buddha.



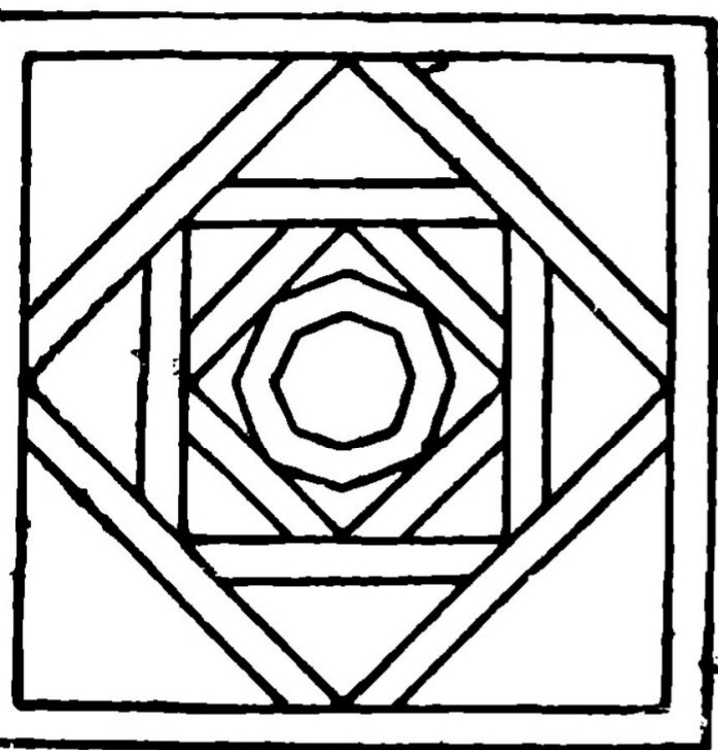
Though the walls were covered with a thick layer of shiny black soot the portions that have been cleaned show that the trumpet-like squinch in the northwest corner was entirely covered with a myriad of small seated Buddhas wearing dark monk's robes covering both shoulders, surrounded by stark white aureoles in a deep blue background. Every face has been destroyed. They are heavy, very solid looking static figures representative of the Sassanian style.

Opposite, on the south-west squinch, we see the work of an artist with a completely different style. It is again a seated Buddha but delicately outlined in grey lines on a white background, the graceful torso bare except for a scarf, the body swathed in the folds of a dhoti. Both the form and the costume are purely Indian in origin in contrast to the purely Sassanian qualities of the workmanship across from it.

A1 is reached by climbing a ramp found on the eastern side of the vestibule of A. This more complex group consists of a vestibule, an assembly hall, a sanctuary and two cells.



From the northern wall of the vestibule one enters into the assembly hall which is here octagonal in shape. On the ceiling one sees for the first time a very beautiful example of the lantern roof: a stylistic imitation of wooden ceilings found even today in the Wakhan Valley and in Nuristan.

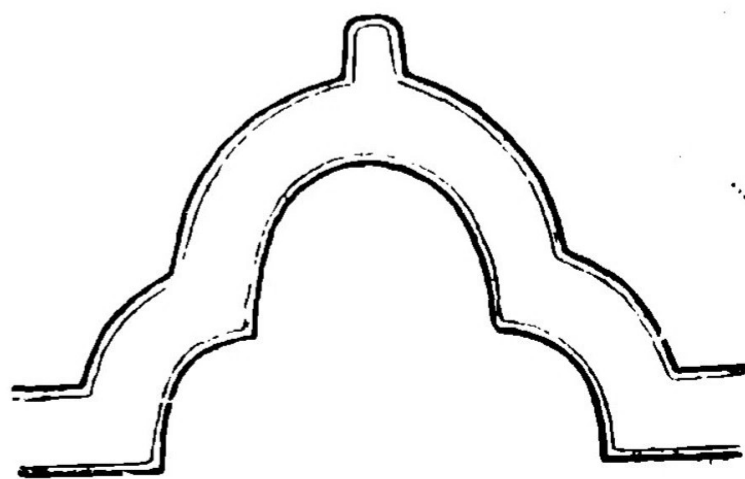


Lantern Roof

Many similar ceilings may be seen throughout Bamiyan especially in the Fola-di Valley and there is an extremely fine example above the niche of the large Buddha. These lantern roofs are indigenous to Bamiyan and were copied extensively by the builders of rock caves throughout

Central Asia and Northern China. They are one of Bamiyan's most important contributions to the world of art.

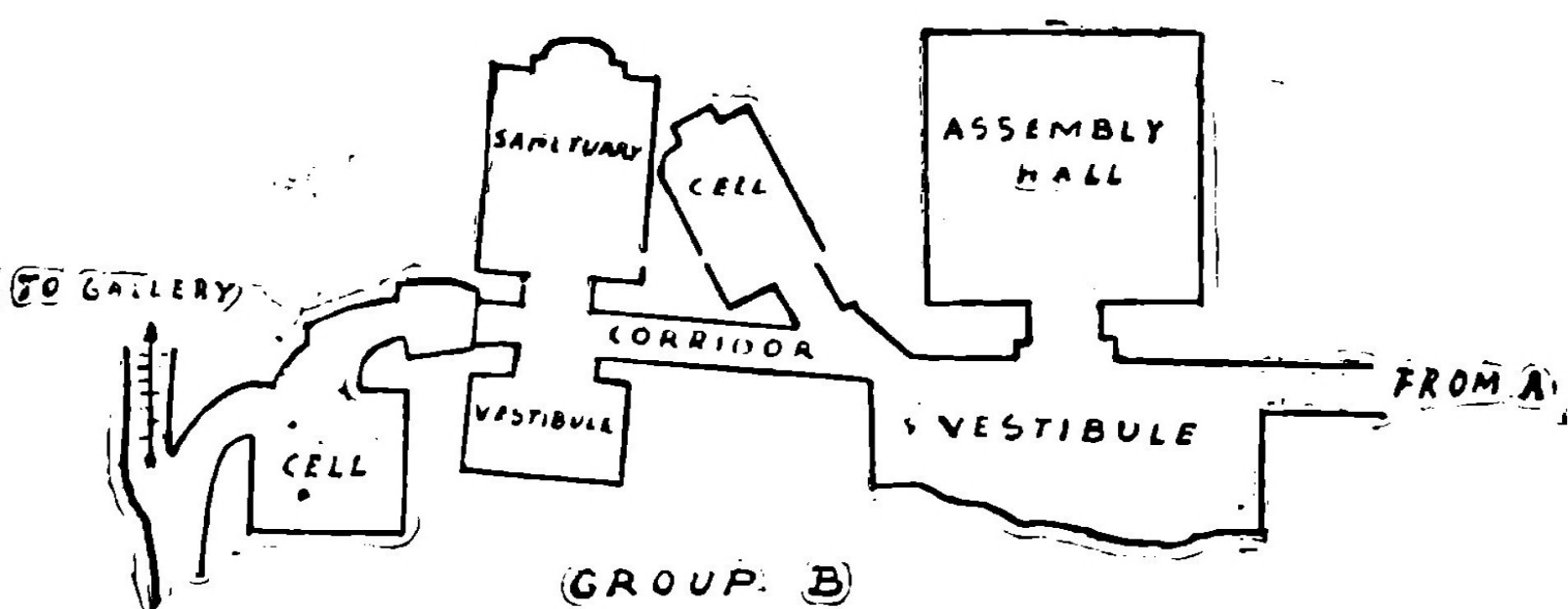
From the west wall of the vestibule one enters the sanctuary where large niches for standing Buddhas and Bodhisattvas surround the lower portion of the wall. Only the pedestals remain, above these the re is a sculptured arcade of trilobed arches under which there were seated Buddhas.



Trilobed Arch

GROUP B

To continue the tour one must next return to the vestibule of A. In the east wall of this vestibule a narrow corridor behind the face of the cliff leads one into the vestibule of B which is a fairly large complex consisting of : an assembly hall with a vestibule, a cell, a sanctuary with a vestibule, and a second cell.



The ceiling of the small sanctuary is an elaborate and unique variation of the lantern roof and the most interesting feature in this group.

Just past the small cell of B one comes to the original staircase. The entrance to B1 is a few steps up, on the right. Here one finds a group composed of a vestibule, two sanctuaries and a cell. In the sanctuary entered through the east wall of the vestibule the entire lower portion of the wall is cut with niches for standing Bodhisattvas and seated Buddha. Above these there are four angled niches

designed for a seated Buddha flanked by standing Bodhisattvas. The position of the lateral figures is very clearly outlined by the visible remains of their aureoles and are especially interesting as they show that the figures must have flowed down the side projection, bending with the curve of the niche, reminiscent of early Christian art. The holes in the floor of this complex, as in many places elsewhere, mark the position of ancient stairways communicating with cells below.

GALLERY

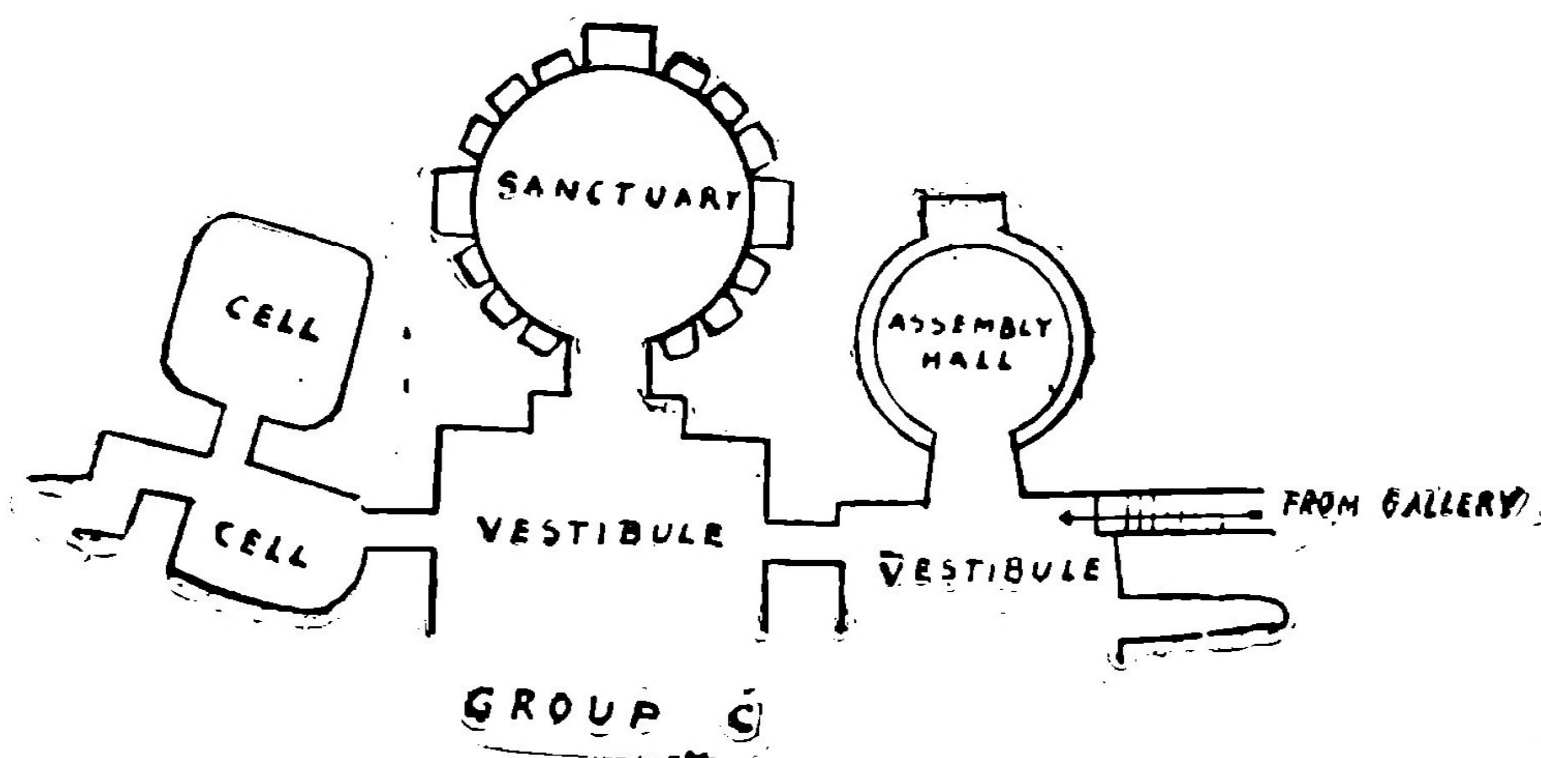
From B1 continue climbing and you soon reach a gallery with openings which allow greater study of the paintings on the soffit of the main niche. In the southern corners there are winged females wearing conical Sassanian helmets and carrying spears and shields. They frame the central figure, identified with the Sun God, who stands on his chariot against a sky of dark blue wearing a long cloak with wide, flaring lapels and a long straight sword attached to his belt. This costume differs but slightly from that worn by the kings of Iran depicted in the classic rock sculptures of the Sassanian Dynasty. The horses are badly damaged but here and there a graceful hoof can be seen and a large yellow disk toward the northwest corner is a wheel of the chariot. The figures on the west wall of the niche, seated as if in boxes behind a carpet-covered, balustrade

are also purely Sassanian in style: heavy, barrel-chested, round shouldered. The Buddhas with both nimbi and aureoles can be differentiated from the laity who are provided with nimbi only. The headdresses are identical to those depicted on the coins of the Hephthalite vassal prince, Sri Vasudeva (592 - 627), which were found in Group C. Some of his coins may be seen in the Kabul Museum.

As you continue on around the gallery be sure to look back at the east wall to see a very finely drawn monk robed in yellow and, higher up, on a red background, the partial figure of a man dressed in a Central Asian tunic with a magnificent pair of high orange boots.

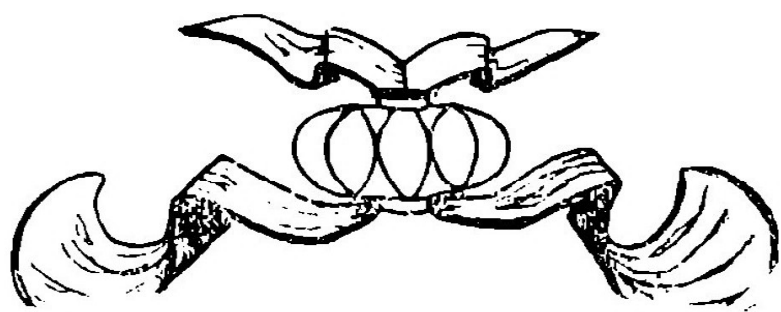
GROUP C

On descending the stairway on the west side one takes the first exit on the right to group C which is comprised of an assembly hall with a vestibule, a sanctuary with a vestibule, and two cells.



The assembly hall is elaborately decorated in the favoured Sassanian colours of pompeian red, green, maroon, blue, ochre, and white; the most extensive use of colour yet seen. In addition, there are flowers, trees, and stylized floral sprays which are delicate and sophisticated. This painting is framed by arcades modeled in clay which suggest an attempt to imitate the sculptural revetments of Gandharan stupas. The winged and beribboned ribbed vases on the ogees of the arcade are indisputable of Sassanian influence.

The paintings on the cupola of the sanctuary are entirely different from those in the adjoining assembly hall. Here a series of Buddhas dressed in somber-hued togas walk between beribboned columns resting on bulbous jar-like lotus pads set among flowers, another Sassanian device. The faces are gone and the curiously dumpy figures, again recalling early Christian art, are recognized as Buddhas only from the aureoles that frame them against a blue background:

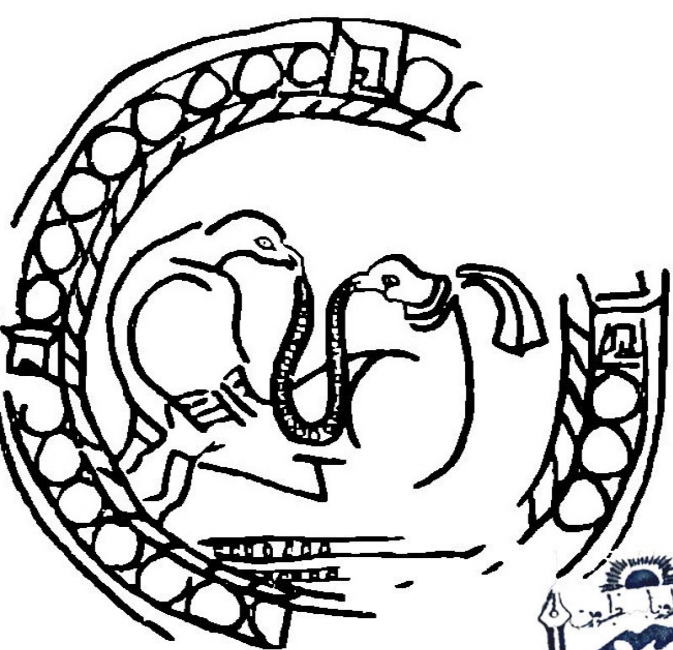


Winged and Beribboned
Ribbed Vase

GROUP D

Return to the main staircase and descend to the next floor on which you will find another sanctuary with a vestibule. On these walls, unfortunately in bad condition, the

purely Sassanian style reaches its florescence. On the ceiling there were a series of medallions or roundels, in the tradition of Sassanian textile designs, containing winged horses, heads of wild boars and dove-like birds with strings of pearls in their beaks. Hunting wild boar was very popular with the kings of Iran and the boar's head became an heraldic symbol of the royal house during the time of Khosuru II and is here seen copied by the ruler of Bamiyan during the early part of the VII century. Part of a medallion with a bird may still be seen on the southwest edge of the vestibule roof. Others, in excellent condition have been removed and may be seen in the Kabul Museum.



Birds with Pearls tracing



The facade of this vestibule is the only one retaining any of its original decoration. It is best studied from the foot of the cliff.

The octagonal sanctuary is very ornate. Above the niches which originally sheltered seated Buddhas is a foliated scroll in each circle of which there is a finely modeled Buddha in low relief.



Foliated Scroll

The placement of human and animal figures within foliated scrolls was very popular in Roman art of the Antonine period and was a motif frequently employed by Gandharan sculptors. Below this frieze there are finely painted Bodhi trees (5) with reddish trunks and branches sheltering seated Buddhas. In the northwest corner these branches flow up under the projection where they burst into sprays of tiny white blossoms. Above the foliated scroll is an ornate arcade of trilobed arches also decorated with foliated scrolls in very high relief.

On the ceiling there is a very interesting example of the lantern roof. The central hexagon is filled with a geometrical design of lozenges and triangles which is repeated on the cupola of Grotto XI near the large Buddha.

After leaving D return to the base of the niche by retracing your steps. Though the staircase continues on down, it is in very bad condition and there is no exit. The room under D has no paintings and is thickly covered with soot. There are six large niches each framed by small niches in the lower wall and just below the cupola there is a cornice with eighteen other niches of different forms and dimensions.

Before leaving this Buddha do not forget to note the facade of the vestibule of D from the foot of the cliff. The

(5) *Bodhi tree-tree under which the Buddha received his enlightenment, rose-apple.*

decor simulates the abutments of wooden beams, immediately below which there is a row of modeled arcades. Between the ends of the beams there were painted medallions containing classical Sassanian motifs such as the wild boar and the birds with strings of pearls.

GROUP E

West of the Buddha is a large trilobed niche sheltering a seated Buddha. Though the figure has been destroyed the basic modeling remains, studded with holes which once held wooden dowels. On the vault there are vestiges of paintings.

GROUP H

Further west, about mid-way between the two colossal Buddhas there is another complex dominated by a beautifully defined trilobed niche which once sheltered a large Buddha. The stairway to the niche is lost in the debris of the crumbling cliff but with a little effort one can get close enough to see some of the paintings. There are nine Buddhas here, six assembled by pairs in three rows, with three seated below. These cover the entire west wall of the niche. Below this is a medallion with a central male figure accompanied by two female figures flying toward the central statue. We shall meet them again on the niche of the large Buddha.

GROUP I

The niche of the smallest of the seated Buddhas which is east of the large standing Buddha is decorated with some of the most beautiful paintings but unfortunately they are now inaccessible. The decoration consists of haloed Buddhas in a central stripe bordered by female dancers and musicians of different racial types. These point to Indian influence in themselves but on a lateral wall there is a Bodhisattva holding a bluestemmed lotus which is almost identical to the famous Bodhisattva of the Ajanta caves.

THE 175 FOOT BUDDHA COMPLEX

The 175 foot Buddha was also carved from the face of the cliff but here the proportions are more harmonious. The rendition of the drapery was accomplished by an entirely new method also. Instead of modeling folds in the clay, an assemblage of cords was fixed to the statue by means of small wooden plugs which were subsequently covered with a thick coat of mud mixed with chopped straw. This in turn was covered with a layer of mortar made of limestone which was then painted. Here then is the final development of the local style; the linear formalization of the drapery is totally schematisized and all traces of classical reality have vanished. This was a technique found in later Gandharan statues and though the date for



Large Buddha, “The colossal figures were coloured and glistening with ornaments; the smaller in blue, the larger in red, faces and hands gilded.”

Photo: J. Cudney

this statue is usually given as III century, some have placed it as late as V century.

Again, the face once covered with gold leaf has been completely mutilated, the right hand, once lifted in the gesture of reassurance and the left, hanging by the side, are missing. The series of small holes covering the body were made by the plugs which held the cords.

The niche was once entirely covered with paintings.



Detail West Wall
Large Buddha
tracing

From the foot of the statue it is possible to see a series of five medallions which still retain their brilliant colours because they were preserved beneath a layer of mud until uncovered by the archaeologists.

These are on the under portion of the projection on the west wall. In these there are three figures, one male and two female, which fly toward the statue in the same style as was noted in Group H.

The same series of medallions are found on the east wall but these are in very bad condition. The one nearest the exterior of the niche, however, can be studied with the aid of binoculars. Here there are three

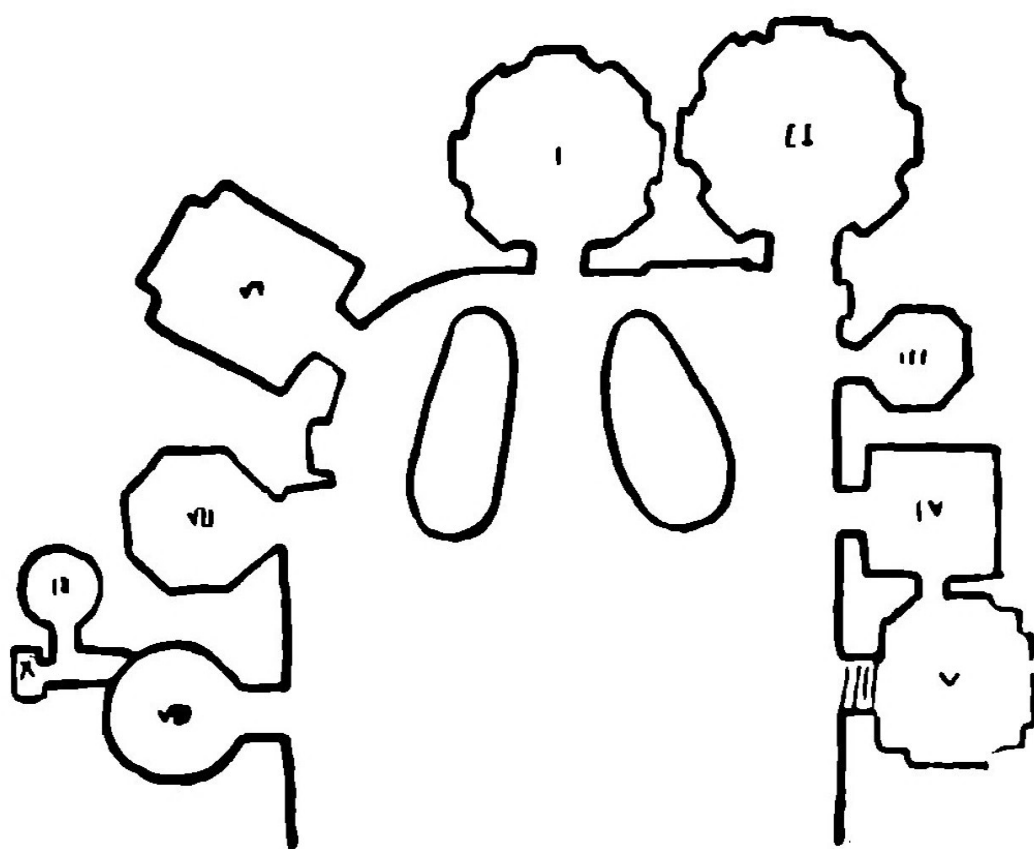


Detail West Wall
Large Buddha
tracing

persons again. In the center stands a man wearing a long belted tunic of dark brown in the Central Asian style. His legs are protected by leggings of panther skin, both toeless and heeless. In his right hand holds a purse of panther skin while his left touches his breast in homage. He is assisted on his left by a man wearing a fur hat and holding a trident in his right hand, and on his right, by a man dressed in yellow bearing a plate of offerings.

GROTTOS

Around the foot of the statue there are ten grottos, probably all executed during the VII century. Only two, I and V, are of particular interest. A flashlight is recommended.



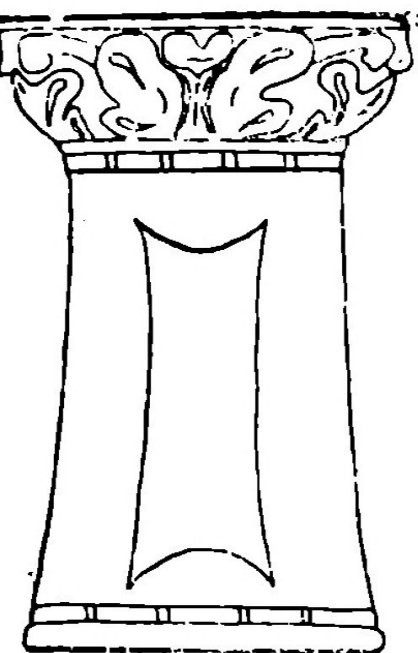
GROTTOS

Base of Large Buddha

GROTTO I

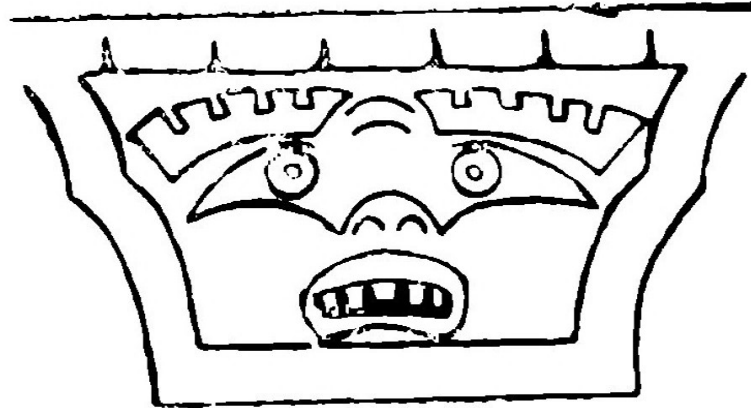
This large octagonal grotto has no paintings, as is the case with all the grottos near the large statue, but it is elaborately decorated with designs executed in high relief.

Above the niches once sheltering statues there is a band of foliated scrolls. Above this there are pedestals on which small Buddha statues sat under trilobed arches connected by squat pilasters with pseudo-corinthian capitols. On the ogee of each arch sit characteristic Sassanian ribbed vases ornamented with ribbons at the base, from the tops of which two wings rise. The arches are connected by grotesque masks of human faces upon which other small Buddhas sat.



**Pseudo-corinthian
Column**

Above this is another band of foliated scrolls followed by another arcade, this time designed for standing Buddhas. These are also connected by grotesque masks, these having conical hats and long beards. Fine examples of both masks from Grotto I and II may be seen in the Kabul Musum. The decoration of the cupola has completely disappeared.



Grotesque Mask

GROTTO V

Rectangular instead of octagonal, this grotto is interest-



Griffin

ing for its ceiling on which one can see an evolved stage of the lantern roof. The inner face of the false beams have a modeled decor of foliated scrolls, fly-

ing ducks and griffins. Very fine examples of these may be seen in the Kabul Museum.

GROTTO XI

To reach this grotto one ascends the cliff to the east of the statue by a precipitous and slippery path leading straight to its entrance. The lower decoration resembles that of I and it is the ceiling which is of significance. The design here centers around a series of hexagons outlined by pearls, a favorite Sassanian motif. In the center of each there was a Buddha with nimbus and aureole. The hexagons are arranged in the shape of a star and joined together by a decoration of lozenges and triangles such as was seen on the ceiling of the sanctuary in D.

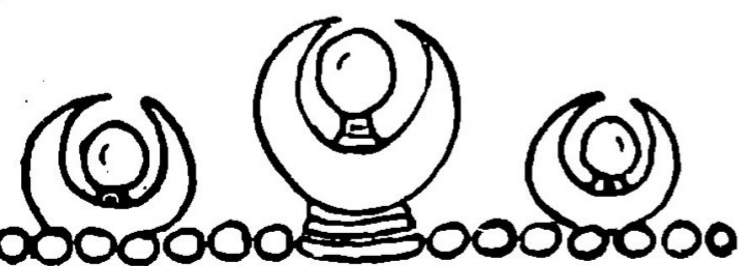
GALLERY

The original staircase around this niche has been destroyed and to reach the gallery one proceeds by way of a

road which is motorable in part, up the western side of the cliff. Continuing on foot and keeping to the face of the cliff one comes directly to the gallery.

From the first look-out one can see the decoration on the east wall. There is a line of draped columns held in place by small orange-tinted faces similar to the sculptured head from G in the Kabul Museum, below which there is a very gay garland of flowers. Immediately below this there is a checker-board design followed by a row of Buddhas and donors seated beneath bodhi trees with large tri-blossomed lotus between them.

The figure to the left is interesting as it differs markedly from the others. This kingly personage wears a cloak of white on each shoulder of which there is a medallion. In addition, he is richly adorned with a neklace of pearls and in his hair he wears a diadem of pearls surmounted by three crescents in each of which there is a jewel. On either side of his head ribbons flow downward toward his shoulders. Both the costume and the headdress bear a remarkable resemblance to the royal King-Hunter from Kakrak which is in the Kabul Museum. The headdress in parti-



Sassanid Diadem

cular is a most characteristic Sassanian feature and is used in the identification of the purely local art style known as Kushano-Sassanian which

reached its peak at Kakrak during a later period. The other figures are typical Buddhas seated in yoga fashion executing characteristic Buddhist gestures known as mudras. The modeling of the hands is exquisite.

Above this row of figures toward the outer face of the niche and on a level with the row of drapery there is an extremely interesting fragment showing a kneeling figure, its face turned south, its body north. It wears the Central Asian tunic with large flaring lapels, belted at the waist. This is a donor and he wears high orange boots, a long sword and a necklace of medallions around his neck. On his head he balances a tray of offerings.

Follow the gallery and in the center you can step out onto the head of the colossal figure. From here one seems surrounded by a vast, crowded scene of male and female divinities amid varied architectural details totally unlike anything seen before at Bamiyan. This whole ceiling, both in form and feeling, was inspired by purely Indian concepts and canons of art. The male figures of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas sit on massive curtained thrones, not in the rigid pose of yoga as their Sassanian counterparts below, but somewhat nonchalantly with their feet crossed at the ankles. Again in contrast, instead of having heavy shoulders covered with somberhued robes, these figures with slender torsos are nude to the waist except for gracefully flowing scarfs and jeweled necklaces. About their legs

dhotis are arranged in careful folds. While their hands form the characteristic Buddhist mudras, their long supple and bejeweled arms and flexible fingers seem to act with weariness and their almond-eyed faces gaze forth with sleepy languid expressions lacking in mystical concentration.



Mudra. Summit
Large Buddha
tracing

Contributing to this aura of worldliness is the existence of the female figure in evidence everywhere. To the west of the exit from the gallery there is a very fine Bodhisattva exhibiting all the characteristics just mentioned and leaning toward him with arms outstretched is an opulent female figure, nude except for the most diaphanous of veils draped from a jeweled gold band at the hips. On the side walls there are more Bodhisattvas separated from each other by captoled columns from the top of which emerge other female forms. Of these, those with the nude busts seem to have cymbals in their fingers and may be presumed to be musicians. If so, their companions are most probably dancers. Behind each group the dome of a stupa is clearly visible.



Pennanted Stupa

All these details are purely Indian in spirit and utterly dissimilar from the Sassanian. The outlining of the body with orange to achieve a modeled effect is also an Indian device and the universal use of indigo, most typical of the Indian palette, is an indisputable indicator of Indian workmanship. The whole honeyed style is typical of Gupta art at its zenith and was probably executed during the latter part of the VI century.

Before leaving, be sure to note the beautiful view of the Foladi Valley.

After leaving the gallery, on the way down the hill, note a path leading further up the cliff, above and behind the main niche.

LANTERN ROOF

On turning right to follow the path up the hill you will note a grotto to your left blocked by a huge mass detached from the cliff. On the roof there is a most beautiful example of the lantern roof. The false beams which look like wood are hewn from the rock and rest on obliquely placed pilasters with ornate capitals modeled of clay.

Continuing up the hill note a large niche toward the top of the cliff with paintings on the vault. The path leads you directly to Grotto XIII which is architecturally different from anything seen before it is very large, rectangular, and has a huge cylindrical barrel-like roof. The presence

of banquettes suggest an assembly hall.

The next grotto is smaller than XIII and aside from a peculiar niche or balcony construction on the west wall has little of artistic interest. At the back to the east of the main niche among numerous grafitti one can, however, make out the following pencilled inscription:

“ If any fool this high samooch explore
Know Charles Masson has been here before.”

Charles Masson was one of that remarkable breed of 19th century English traveler-correspondents who penetrated into the heart of little known territories such as this with an intrepid curiosity and acute powers of observation. He spent considerable time at Bamiyan in 1835 and it was he who first presented an informed account of this valley to the west. A hundred years were to go by, however, before extensive archaeological study of the site was undertaken by the French archaeological mission in Afghanistan, *Délégation Archéologique Française en Afghanistan*, (D.A.F.A.), 1922-33. It is to them, and most especially to M. and Mme. Hachin and M. Carl that we owe our understanding of this fabulous valley.

THE FOLADI AND KAKRAK VALLEYS

Foladi: The valley west of the plateau. The road branches off the main road to Band - i - Amir about two kilometers from the gas station .

Kakrak: The valley east of the plateau. Pass on beyond Shahr-i-Gholghola and Saidabad and head southwest one kilometer. There is a 40 minute walk from the car to the site across the Kalou River. The site cannot be reached when the river is in spate.

The Buddhists had religious communities in the middle of each valley, the principal center in the Bamiyan valley and two others in the valleys of Foladi to the southwest and Kakrak to the southeast.

In Foladi a great many grottos with lantern roofs can be seen on the right.

In Kakrak the main niche sheltered a standing Buddha of 21 feet with very harmonious proportions. Close by, the archaeologists found a sanctuary in which the wall-paintings had been entirely covered with mud perhaps in

an attempt to hide them from invaders. Thus protected they remained in perfect condition, their colours brilliant, their detail unmarred. These have been removed and are now in the Kabul Museum.

The most interesting figure in these paintings is that of the King-Hunter seated upon a throne, his dog at his feet, a bow in his hand, a quiver by his side. He wears the characteristic Sassanian headdress of a pearl diadem with three crescents with a jewel in each and ribbons flowing toward his shoulders as was noted on the niche of the large Buddha. He sits beneath a bodhi tree and behind him are stupas bedecked with flags and banners. With him are Buddhas separated by painted representations of the sculptural decoration found in the grottos at the foot of the large Buddha.

The style represented here is quite different from either of the styles seen at Bamiyan and yet it is very definitely derived from both. Elements of both have been melded together to create a distinctive style which is the valley's own and known as Kushano- Sassanian. All indications point to a much later date for this complex, perhaps even as recent as the VIII and IX centuries.

There are numerous Islamic ruins in the valley indicating that it figured prominently in the defense of Shahr-i-Gholghola. Directly above the niche of the 21 foot Buddha there is a tower resembling those protecting the en-

trance to Shahr-i-Zohak except for the fact that it is taller and thinner. Remains of ramparts and other towers can be seen all along the ridge.



Large Buddha to right, small Buddha to left. “The high smooth pastel cliffs faced across a narrow valley by a plateau called for pick and chisel with which to exemplify, in grand proportions, the magnitude of the ultimate Idea.”

Photo: J Cudney

C. 400 A.D. FA HSIEN From CHINA

Visits Bamiyan

“It happened that the king of the country was then holding the great quinquennial assembly. When this is to be held, the king requests the presence of the Sramas (priests) from all quarters of his kingdom. They come as if in clouds and when they are all assembled, their place of session is grandly decorated. Silken streamers and canopies are hung out in it, and water-lilies in gold and silver are made and fixed up behind the places where the chief of them are to sit. When clean mats have been spread, and they are all seated, the king and his ministers present their offerings according to the rule and the law. The assembly takes place in the first, second or third month, for the most part of the spring.

“After the king has held the assembly, he further exhorts the ministers to make other and special offerings. The doing of this extends over one, two, three, five or even seven days; and when all is finished, he takes his own riding-horse, saddles, bridles, and waits on them himself, while he makes the noblest and most important minister of

the kingdom mount him. Then, taking fine woolen cloth, all sorts of precious things, and articles which the priests require, he distributes them among them, uttering vows at the same time along with all his ministers; and when his distribution has taken place, he again redeems whatever he wishes from the Sramas.

“ There is in the country a spittoon which belonged to Buddha, made of stone and in colour like his alms bowl. There is also a tooth of Buddha’s for which the people have reared a tope (stupa), connected with which there are more than a thousand monks and their disciples, all students of Hinayana . . .

“ The country is in the midst of the Onion range. The snow rests on them both winter and summer. There are also among them venomous dragons, which, when provoked, spit forth poisonous winds, and cause showers of snow and storms of sand and gravel. Not one in ten thousand of those who encounter these dangers escapes with his life.”

Translated from the Chinese

by James Legge in “ A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms, an Account by the Chinese Monk Fa-hsien of his travels in India and Ceylon A. D. 399-414” 1886

**HSUEN-TSUNG. A CHINESE TRAVELER,
describes Bamiyan in 632 A.D.**

“Fen-yen-na. This kingdom is about 2000 li (6) from east to west, and 300 li from north to south. It is situated in the midst of the Snowy Mountains (Koh-i-Baba). The people inhabit towns either in the mountains or the valleys, according to circumstances.

The capital leans on a steep hill, bordering on a valley six or seven li in length. On the north it is backed by high precipices. It produces spring-wheat but few flowers or fruits. It is suitable for cattle, and affords pasture for many sheep and horses. The climate is wintry; and the manners of the people are hard and uncultivated. The clothes are chiefly made of skin and wool, which are the most suitable for the country.

The literature, customary rules, and money used in commerce are the same as those of the Tukhara (Bactria south of the Oxus). Their language is a little different but on point of personal appearance they closely resemble each other. These people are remarkable, among all their neigh-

(6) 1 Mile equals 5 li.

pours, for a love of religion; from the highest form of worship to the three jewels (Buddha), down to the worship of the hundred spirits, there is not the least absence of earnestness and the utmost devotion of heart. The merchants, in arranging their prices as they come and go, fall in with the signs afforded by the spirits. If good, they act accordingly, if evil, they seek to propitiate the powers. There are more than ten convents and more than 1000 priests. They belong to the Little Vehicle (Hinayana), and follow the school of the Lokottaravadins.

To the north-east of the royal city there is a mountain, on the declivity of which is placed a stone figure of Buddha, erect in height 140 or 150 feet. Its golden hues sparkle on every side, and its precious ornaments dazzle the eyes by their brightness.

To the east of this spot there is a convent which was built by a former king of the country. To the east of the convent there is a standing figure of the Sakya Buddha, made of metallic stone in height 100 feet. Two or three li to the east of the royal city in a convent, there is a reclining Buddha entering into Nirvana, which is more than 100 feet in length...

The king of this country every time he assembles the great congregation having sacrificed all his possessions, from his wife and children down to his country's treasures, gives in addition his own body; then his ministers and

the lower order of officers prevail on the priests to barter back these possessions (the royal family and the royal treasure); and in these matters most of their time is taken up”

Translated from the Chinese

*“Si-yu-ki”, Buddhist records of the
Western World,, by Samuel Beal, 1906.*

AN ACCOUNT OF BAMMIAN

by the Korean monk

Hui - ch'ao

c. 727 A.D.

‘Then, from the kingdom of Sie-yu after passing Ki-pin (Kapissa), we traveled toward the north for seven days, and reached the kingdom of Fan-yin (Bamiyan). The king is an Iranian. He is not a vassal of any other kingdom; his foot soldiers and cavalry are strong and numerous; the other kingdoms dare not come to attack them. For clothing, the people wear shirts of cotton, cloaks of fur, coats of felt, etc. The country produces sheep, horses, and cotton; it abounds in grapes. This country is in the snow and is very cold; many of the dwellings are built on the mountains. The king, the chiefs, and the people are very devoted to the Three Jewels (Buddhism); monasteries and priests are in abundance; they practice the Great and the Little Vehicle. In this kingdom, as in Sie-yu and other kingdoms, they clip their beards and cut their hair. Their habits are very similar to those of Ki-pin though there are many differences. The language of the country differs from

that of other kingdoms. Then, from Fan-yin, we went toward the north for twenty days; when we arrived in the kingdom of T'ou-ho-lo (modern Mazar -i- Sharif, Badakhshan)'

*Translated from the Chinese
by Paul Pelliot.*

SHAHR-I-GHOLGHOLA (The City of Noise)

Situated on a conical hill to the east of the Bamiyan Hotel, on the northern-most edge of the plateau.

Route 1: Descend by the road from the Hotel. At the bottom of the hill. before reaching the bridge, take the road to the right which leads to the southern approach to the citadel.

Route 2: Follow the tree-lined road south from the Hotel. Take a branch road to the left, down into a shallow ravine, up onto the next plateau, then the next road to the left, to the base of the conical hill. Route 2 is recommended in the early morning when the citadel seems to glow in the golden light of the rising sun.

The name Shahr-i-Gholghola is generally applied to the whole plateau south of the cliff with the Buddhas; still-visible remains of dwellings, palaces, and mosques scattered here and there silently attest to the fact that the Islamic city extended throughout this area. More particularly, however, the name applies to the conical hill on which the citadel of the city stood.



M. Johnson

Remains of dwellings, palaces, and mosques scattered
here and there silently attest to the extent of the Islamic
city."

When the city was inhabited it was simply called Shahr-i-Bamiyan or the City of Bamiyan. It was only after its destruction that it came to be known as Shahr-i-Gholghola or the City of Noise. It may be noted that in western works this city is variously referred to as the Silent City, the Screaming City, or the Cursed City. These terms though apparently contradictory refer, however, to the single incident of its destruction. You may either think of the city as noisy with screams during the final massacre, as silent in its aftermath, or as cursed by the vow of the Mongol chief. The Mongols themselves, as a matter of fact, called the city Mao Balegh meaning the Cursed City.

Shahr-i-Gholghola is purely Islamic having been built long after Buddhism had vanished from the valley, in the eleventh century. In its day, it was a very prosperous city as the great caravans moving north and south continued to stop here as they had for centuries. In addition, an elaborate irrigation system provided for extensive cultivation throughout the valley which was also famous for its glazed ceramic work with which the palaces and mosques of the city may have been decorated. Thus, thriving agricultural, industrial, and commercial pursuits added to the riches naturally accrued by this flourishing political and cultural capital.

To protect Shahr-i-Gholghola, the kings of Bamiyan had built a series of look-out towers and forts throughout

the area, especially along the main caravan route which passed by the mouth of the valley, ten miles to the east. Remains of these may be seen along both routes now used to visit Bamiyan, the most impressive of course being Shahr-i-Zohak and Sar Khoshak. It was at Shahr-i-Zohak, in fact, that the final drama of Shahr-i-Gholghola began in the year 1222. Mutugen, the favourite grand-son of Genghis Khan, had been sent to lay siege to the fort and was there killed by its valiant defenders. Tradition says that upon hearing of this, Genghis Khan took an oath before the boy's mother promising to put to death every living soul in the valley.

Accordingly, he set out with his army, demolishing the forts of Sar Khoshak and the Shahr-i-Zohak on the way, and encamped in the valley of Kakrak to the east of the splendid city. From here he launched his attack. Though initially repulsed, the day was finally won by the Mongols who then ruthlessly sacked the valley; devastation was complete. Although men later returned to the valley, the complex irrigation system was never repaired and great expanses of barren desert now replace the once fertile plains.

Thus today, as one follows the path which winds up and around the hill to its summit, it takes a great deal of imagination to see the narrow winding streets filled with activity, the doorways opening onto courtyards sparkling

with the many hues of tiled walls and flowering gardens; rain has melted the outlines.

The city has never been lived in since that day of horror. It stands today, therefore, as an eroding but immensely impressive monument to Mongol devastation.

It is perhaps well to note here that recorded history tells us that the last king of Bamiyan, Sultan Jalal-Din Manguberti, escaped the final end suffered by his people. The defense of the citadel had been well planned and courageously carried out but after withstanding the furious onslaught of the enemy for many days, the king could see that their efforts were soon to be defeated. He slipped out of the city under cover of night and with the aid of his allies recruited a new army but they too were gradually overcome. Pursued by the Mongols, Jalal-ud-Din finally reached the banks of the Indus, where, though alone and fainting with fatigue, he jumped into the river together with his horse and swam to the opposite bank and safety.

THE LEGEND OF SHAHR-I-GHOLGHOLA

As told, here condensed, by Mir Ali, a Tajik of the upper Bamiyan valley and completed by a Hazarah resident of Saidabad in 1937 to Madame J. Hackin and A.A. Kohzad, *Indian Art and Letters*, Vol. VIX, No. I. the poetic description of the fall of Shahr-i-Ghola is taken from a poem by Charles Masson published in "Legends of the Afghan Countries in Verse", 1848.

During its days of glory, Shahr-i-Gholghola was the central city of a kingdom ruled by the Khwarizmain ruler Jalal-ud-Din Manguberti. Standing on its sugar-loaf hill, and towering above the whole valley, the citadel contained within its well-defended walls a succession of buildings which formed the king's palace.

Jalal-ud-Din, though still a young man, was already a widower and his friends and advisors were insistent that he should remarry. The king had several daughters but none to compare with Lala Khatun, a dazzling beauty, who exercised considerable influence over her father for he trusted her and had the fullest confidence in her judgment. She reigned as a despot in the palace and this was



Ahr-i- Gholghola, Citadel. “The center of a strong dynasty
powerful and far-flung Kingdom.

oto: J. Cudney

the cause of jealousy in many quarters. Plots were laid against her but she kept close watch on those whom she suspected, demanding their expulsion from the palace. Many had thus been sent to distant and lonely posts and she was cordially hated for her cruelty.

One day when her father told her of his plans to remarry she recognized the hand of her enemies. Having no intention of allowing the presence of a strange woman in the palace, she called on her father to abandon the idea. But when, after weeks of quarreling, she learned that envoys had been sent to the Court of Ghazni to ask for the hand of the princess, she realized she had lost.

Pining now to leave the palace she despatched a messenger to her father, the king: "Lord, Lala Khatun, the Light of the Eyes, sends me to thee with the following request. East of the palace, on the high ground, there is a shady garden. When evening falls, a cool air breathes among its trees, the fragrance of its flowers causes lovers to swoon, the light of the moon waits on those who listen to the song of the nightingale. This garden in which thou lovest to walk in a summer night, and which thou hast laid with so much pride and care, Lala Khatun asks thee to give to her, that she may build in it an abode where she will live in peace, far from the intrigues of the harem which would impair her delicate health."

Hoping that the estrangement would be forgotten and

anxious that good understanding should again prevail between them, the king at once agreed to give up his wonderful garden.

“Send to me all those who are builders by trade” she wrote to her father, “for I wish my castle to be an image of myself, and I beg you to leave to me the entire care of its construction.” Jalal-ud-Din not only accepted these conditions, but also informed Lala Khatun she could spend as much as she liked and choose within the palace whatever pleased her fancy for the decoration of her new abode.

Accordingly in a short time there arose in the midst of the fairy garden a very large building with four corner towers and ramparts of such giddy heights as to excite the wonder of wayfarers. When the roof was nearing completion she made an inspection of the most beautiful carpets, ordered all of the most valuable hangings to be removed, as well as many lovely caskets full of useless ornaments. The king was none too happy to find one half of his possessions thus carried away to Kalah-i- Dokhtar, Castle of the Daughter, (7) as the new palace was called, but to conceal his dismay he decided to feast the people on the day when his daughter was to move.

The great day came at last; the people were excited, preparations were made everywhere. Coffers bursting with

(7) *Today in the modern village of Saidabad*

silken garments filled Lala Khatun's room; veils of gauze as light as diaphanous clouds lay here and there. Suddenly the ladies-in-waiting were startled by the sound of groans coming from the inner room and the old nurse, on entering, found the princess sobbing, "Look at my legs: I can no longer move them." The king rushed to his daughter's side. Pressing her palsied ankles between his hands he called for all the most learned physicians to assemble. In great numbers they examined her, yet in spite of all their treatments, in spite of all the magic spells, there was no sign of improvement. Time passed and people began to talk of other matters.

One day, Lala Khatun, unable to bear the tedium, asked to go to her own castle and was accordingly carried to the uppermost story of one of the lofty towers. Here she lay gazing at her father's palace from whence she was banished forever. She saw no one other than her old nurse, terminating the visits of her father, and an oppressive silence fell over the whole kingdom.

Winter passed; spring was at hand.

One of the early days of that spring a holy man with seven disciples stopped to rest in a hamlet near Bamiyan. Cold and weary after walking two hundred miles across the mountains from Herat, he sent his disciples to the cave-dwellers to ask for fuel. The undisguised mistrust with which they were met and the meagerness of their offer-

ings so enraged the old man that he sent the disciples to the hills for cakes of ice which he set on fire. The whole valley was soon informed of the miracle accomplished by the holy man who they now called Mir Ali Yakhsuz, the Ice-Burning Saint, and sick people were brought to him from every corner of the realm that he might heal them.(8)

Jalal-ud-Din, too, went out to visit the saint. Having reached the camp, the king was asked to take the seat of honour. At a sign from the master, a disciple brought to the king a bowl of deer's milk and on being served this precious offering the king realized that his daughter would be healed. Even so, before he had time to submit his request, a messenger announced the sudden and complete recovery of Lala Khatun. In token of his gratitude the king gave the saint one of his daughters in marriage. .

The king's heart was at peace once more. His daughter was healed, he was no longer tortured by anxiety, and there was nothing in the way of his marriage. His suit having met with a favourable reception at the Court of Ghazni, he could now make preparations for his journey

(8) *The picturesque shrine of Mir Sayid Ali Yakhsuz lies just west of the gas station in a grove of poplars and is still visited by his followers, some of whom have presented very artistic plaques carved in black stone which are embedded in the wall around the tomb. Legend also says that the tomb of Jalal-ud-Din's daughter lies beside that of the saint.*

here. Thus hopeful of the future, the king set out with a large retinue of high officials.

This sudden departure took Lala Khatun by surprise. All hope of recovering her former power was dispelled and she shut herself up once more the better to feed her resentment and meditate on revenge.

Then one day rumours reached Kalah-i-Dokhtar that the warriors of Genghis Khan were invading the country leaving naught by death and ruin in their wake. Shahr-i-Zohak, a military outpost only 10 miles down the valley, was soon besieged by the Mongols. Lala Khatun became frantic with joy for here she saw her chance for revenge. On the roof of one of her towers she danced, spinning around in a cloud of gossamer veils, and dragging into the mad whirl the old nurse who followed her like a shadow. Shahr-i-Zohak was captured and, no further resistance being possible, the menace now fell directly upon Shahr-i-Gholghola. The barbarians surged up the valley and encamped in the valley of Kakrak for the evening.

Now beams the moon resplendent queen of night!

Full on the earth its golden radiance pours;

On Bamiyan's vale it sheds a holy light,

Where in its arch, the idol darkly lours,

And the temple grots - mysterious sight!

Fit shrines and fanes of supernatural powers!

Nor less benignly its rich lustre falls,
On proud Gholghola's stately towers and walls.

Now from the Tartar squadrons on the plain,
The captains with the banners in advance,
Loud drums and trumpets bellow forth amain,
Amid the clang of buckler and of lance;
The Chieftain eyes them, of their bearing vain,
And bids his heralds to the walls advance,
And there, a parley sounded, boldly flings
His proud defiance to the Tejik King.

Swift with exalting cries and wild despair,
On the proud fortress rush the maddened host,
That lengthened ladders to its walls they bear,
And press contending for the dangerous post;
Gholghola's bands an equal fervour share,
And oft its battlements are won and lost-
Whole crowds unpitied fall! When shines the day,
The Tartar sword for once hath missed its prey.

The Tartar chief informs his serried host:
"Tomorrow morn we lead our bands away."
Such was the chief's resolve; and in his tent
He musing sat, and mighty projects planned-
When told, a female from the fortress sent
Disguised, attends with letter in her hand.

Received-he reads the missive, speaks content,
Thus, "Tell your lady, I salute her hand."
Then rising shouts, "Our Tartar Gods are just,
And Gholghola yet shall yield to woman's lust!"

The letter was, of course, from Lala Khatun and it ended thus: "On the tableland you can see four watermills fed by a mysterious underground canal which also supplies the city with water. As the spring yields but little water it is not easy to discover this canal. You will have to go upstream as far as the spring and throw into it a quantity of chopped straw; then keeping your eye on the motes you will follow them downstream until they start whirling as though caught in some eddy. This is the spot where you find the underground canal begins. If you block it up with felt matting, the whole city will be deprived of water and it must perforce surrender."

Genghis followed her advice and was soon able to penetrate the citadel.

Now gallant warriors, raise a mighty shout-
"The welcome signal to our friends without."
The bands Without return a deafening yell,
And forward rush with loud promiscuous din,
On every side they scale the walls pell mell,
And join their conquering friends already in.
On every side the reeling Tajiks fell,

To spare a Tajik dog is deemed a sin-
Spare none ! the chieftain cries, Spare none, kill, slay !
“The night for slaughter, and the morn for prey !”
And comes the morn at length ; amidst the dead
And dying, takes the Tartar chief his stand-
“ Gholghola’s glory has for ever fled,
And we are now the masters of the land !
“Enough of blood, since none remains to shed-
The city’s treasure lies at your command ;
“ But heed - a woman’s lust hath brought this shame
“ On Gholghola and the Tajik fame !

Meanwhile at Lala Khatun’s castle, Lala Khatun had summoned her old nurse and ordered her to dress her as a bride. The old woman massaged her, anointed her with perfumes ; combed and oiled her hair, and tied in her forelock her most costly jewel ; a necklace of golden bells encircled her slender throat, numberless rings adorned her henna-tinted fingers ; a veil of gold covered with flowers was draped about her head. Thus appareled she awaited the visit of the warrior.

Days passed. There were no visitors to her chamber. Then on the seventh day, violent blows struck her door and Lala Khatun and her nurse were roughly told to travel with their captors. Senseless, unable to stand on her feet, Lala Khatun was dragged out, the nurse behind her,

and hoisted onto a saddle. A dozen horsemen surrounded the two women and they rode off at a quick pace. Lala Khatun was soon faint; they laid her on a carpet on the ground. Genghis, who halted suddenly and inquired into the cause for the delay, looked down at her, his face a hard mask.

The warriors were summoned. Genghis told them the tale sparing no particulars of her treachery, ending thus: "That girl deserves no mercy, she must be punished for having abominably betrayed a father who was too good to her." The two women, huddled together in their distress, fell under a hail of stones where they lay until they passed away without a word of lamentation.

The news of the seige of Shahr-i-Gholghola reached Jalal-ud-Din during the festivities of his wedding with the beautiful Ghaznevid princess. Quickly raising an army he marched north but on reaching the narrow valley of Ghorband he heard of Lala Khatun's betrayal and of the complete devastation of his kingdom. He fell to the earth, dead, as though struck by a thunderbolt.

KALAH-I-DOKHTAR

(The Daughter's Castle)

Situated 1 kilometer east and a little south of Shahr-i-Gholghola. - From the base of the conical hill drive south to meet another road, turn left and continue into the outskirts of the modern village of Saidabad which lies under a poplar grove. The castle is now inhabited by Hazara villagers who are most hospitable in allowing entrance to their courtyard when permission is requested. It is of course advisable to have a Farsi-speaking person accompany the group so that your request will be properly understood. Failing this one may walk around the outer wall of the village to view the facade of the castle from the northern side.

The Legend of Shahr-i-Gholghola in this Guide recounts a romantic history of this castle featured in the local lore of Bamiyan's present inhabitants. It is based, however, more on fancy than on fact.

Especially worthy of note are: the lattice-work doorway on the upper level to the north, the crenellated walls, the arrow-head recesses, the tall arched niches and other elements of decoration.

A visit to this palace helps one immeasurably to envision the ancient architecture of this valley.

CHILSITOON

(40 pillars)

Situated half a mile (1 kilometer) west of Bamiyan to the right of the Band-i-Amir road. 10 minutes walk from road through a Hazara village built in the grottos, up a perpendicular ravine on the route to Ak Robat. - A flashlight is imperative; a guide necessary. Not highly recommended unless one is an avid apeleologist.

Believed by some to be the home of prehistoric man in Bamiyan but conclusive evidence to support this is lacking. These natural caves, there are two, are said to have forty pillars and to stretch on without end.

In the local lore it is believed that in time of danger in days past, the women and children were hidden here while the men stayed without to face the foe.

During Islamic times this was a major route over the mountains via Ak Robat. A tower on the left as you ascend toward the north was used as a look-out tower and control station for the passing caravans.

AJDAHAR-I-SORKH DAR

(The Valley of the Dragon)

Situated five miles and 20 minutes to the west of Bamiyan .- Follow the route to Band-i- Amir; about three miles from the gas pump take the road branching to the left and proceed to the foot of the Ajdahar cliff.-Jeep recommended though a Volks-wagon can make the trip when the river is not high. The climb to the top takes about 10 minutes.

The Valley of the Dragon is visited by Hazara pilgrims from far and near for it is here that the hero, Hazrat Ali, performed one of his legendary miracles. Though visited at any time of the year, the valley is especially popular on Feast days when many picnic on the hill-side and camp for the night under the stars.

Ali was a cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Moham-
med. He was the fourth caliph and an active participater
in the early battles with the Prophet and in later battles
waged for the cause of Islam. The legends of Ali, of which
there are over 1000, extol the two sides of his character,
warrior and saint. Ali is particularly venerated through-
out Central Afghanistan and most especially in the Ba-
miyan area and its vicinity where there are several shrines
commemorating his miraculous deeds such as those at

Band-i-Amir and at Ajdahar-i-sorkh Dar. It may be said that Ali holds the same place in the hearts of the people of Bamiyan today that the Buddha held in ancient times.

Driving to the Valley of the Dragon one passes through a narrow barren valley, with many interesting rock colours and formations. Suddenly the valley is blocked by a high cliff on the top of which are the white encrustations from mineral springs in which the Hazaras recognize the form of a petrified dragon. The head lies toward the north where the bright red deposits are said to represent the blood of the animal and the tiny rushes of water from the springs are recognized as his tears. A raised wall in the center of the dragon's back is considered to have served Ali's faithful horse, Doldol, as a manger when he came to fetch his master.

Along the entire length of this deposit, said to be over 900 feet long, is a large fissure in which one may see a great many ibex horns having to do with the ritual of a goatcult practiced here since prehistoric times. By placing your ear to this fissure it is sometimes possible to hear the sounds of the spring below and in local lore this is said to denote the groans of the dragon.

It is also interesting to note that M. Foucher advanced the theory that this encrustation might in fact be the reclining Buddha to which Hsuen - tsung refers in his account of his visit to Bamiyan in 632 A.D.

THE LEGEND OF THE DRAGON

As told by Mir Ali, resident of Bamiyan; taken from 'Legendes and Coutumes Afghanes' by R. Hackin and A.A. Kohzad.

Sometime around the seventh century the people in the valley of Bamiyan were living in terror of a gigantic dragon which roamed the country-side breathing fire and devouring all that crossed its path. The King sacrificed the best of his warriors in an attempt to kill the monster but to no avail. Finally, seeing the country on the brink of ruin the King asked the dragon what would keep him happy in his own valley. The price was high: one young live girl, two live camels, and 600 pounds of food to be delivered daily.

It was a bitter decision for the King but in the interest of peace he issued a proclamation establishing a special bureau for the management and control of the dragon's daily requirements. Peace and prosperity returned to valley marred only by the tears of those forced to sacrifice their daughters.

This unhappy duty eventually fell to an old woman who

had nothing in life except a ravishingly beautiful young daughter. One night she led her daughter by the hand to the mouth of the dragon's lair, where they sat together upon a rock to await his awakening. In their grief they did not notice a young man asleep nearby but their sobs and lamentations awakened him. Inquiring into the cause of their distress he consoled them by saying that he would kill the dragon that very day.

As the rising sun deepened the pink hills to crimson, the dragon came forth for his meal only to find the young warrior with sword in hand. The battle began; though it was long and fierce every ruse used by the dragon was miraculously foiled by the young man. The young girl, watching the bold exploits of her hero, was filled with wonder but when the dragon charged breathing huge flames of fire from his nostrils, she thought he must surely be consumed and cried out to God for mercy. To her amazement she saw the young man lift his sword and describe a circle in the air just as the flames were about to envelope him whereupon the flames fell to earth as red tulips. In his fury the dragon roared with such vehemence that the whole valley trembled, but his power was spent and the young man delivered the fatal blow.

Splitting the dragon in two, down the entire length of his huge body, the young man turned to speak to the lovely maiden only to find that she was no longer there. She

had already left for Bamiyan to spread the news of her wonderful deliverance by the hand of this young man who she now knew to be Ali himself. She was met with cries of dismay for on seeing her the people surmised that she had disobeyed her king and that the fury of the hungry dragon would again engulf them. Calm and serene, her face aglow with the revelation just imparted to her, she marched straight to the palace, the crowds behind her.

As she related her story to the King, a huge black sulfurous cloud rose from the dragon's valley. It hung over the whole valley for three days while the people cringed with fear and dread, their prayers filling the air. On the fourth day the sun shone with such brilliance that all believed in the young girl's story and with the King at their head they set off, singing songs of joy and carrying rich treasure, to pay homage to their deliverer.

Upon arriving they found that Ali had departed upon his faithful horse Doldol who has mysteriously come for him. The petrified body of the dragon, lying like a dam across the valley, was, however, proof enough of the miracle so they camped there and feasted.



Shahr -i- Zohak “An amazing fortress crowning the natural defences of a high magenta-red cliff.”

Photo: A.S. Asifi

SHAHR-I-ZOHAK

(The Red City)

Situated 10 miles and 30 minutes to the east of Bamiyan at the confluence of the Bamiyan and Kalu Rivers. - On reaching the junction of the two routes to Kabul, turn right into the Unai Pass route, cross the bridge and leave the car. - Proceed across the fields toward the west, crossing the Kalu River via a small foot bridge, to two massive round towers at the base of the red cliff and a path leading straight to the second stage on the summit. - This climb is not difficult and takes approximately twenty minutes. The climb to the third stage is extremely steep



This amazing fortress crowning the natural defenses of a high magenta-red cliff was built from the soil of the cliff itself and for this reason foreign visitors have named it the Red City. Nothing tells us just how it acquired its local name of Shahr-i-Zohak, City of Zohak. Zohak being a legendary king of Persian literature.

Evidence to support the fact that very early B. C. man

once lived upon this high cliff has been found and archaeologists have also found evidence of a fortress of the sixth century A.D. which they attribute to the Western Turks. The only documented story, however, follows that of Shahr-i-Gholghola.

Standing at its top the visitor may be fortunate enough to witness the passing of a present day camel caravan and thus carry himself back through the centuries to the time when this was a major boulevard of the world. It is also not difficult to imagine the plains below swarming with horses in the furious clash of battle on that day in 1222 when a young Mongol boy's death signaled the end of the valley's brilliant history. Genghis Khan's retaliation was fast and decisive.

The path that the visitor follows from the base of the cliff today must be the original one used in ancient days, for one can easily see from the position of the towers and from the remaining portions of the rampart that this was the only ascent possible. These towers had no doorways, being entered by means of ladders which the soldiers pulled up after themselves. The wooden platforms on which they stood to shoot through loopholes have long since disappeared but the holes which held the supporting beams are clearly visible. The construction most crucial to the life of the fortress, a concealed passage through which water from subterranean caches supplied by the waters of

both the Kalu and Bamiyan rivers was secretly acquired, also formed part of the defense-works on the side of the cliff.

Nearing the top the path proceeds through an easily defended tunnel straight through the rock and brings the visitor to the second of the three complexes built on the summit.

The deposition of these three stages may be more easily understood when viewed from the base on the road from Bamiyan, just before reaching the junction. From here one sees a group of ruined buildings on the northernmost edge of the cliff. This is stage one. Behind these a long crenellated wall pierced by a gateway flanked by two massive round towers marks the second stage. Above this high on the uppermost peak, is another group of ruins, stage three. Various primary constructions for defense such as look-out towers and walls may be seen on the side of the cliff leading up to these major complexes.

Of the three stages, the second offers the most interesting aspects for study. The massive round towers seen from below now appear to be somewhat squat and ribbed rather like pumpkins. Upon entering the gateway between these one observes a doorway on the left leading into a large circular room which is in fact the interior of one of the towers. The lack of windows here leads one to conjecture that the roof must have had a circular orifice for light and

air. There are eight niches in the wall. The arches of some of these are covered with soot and may therefore have held torches at night while the others may have supported poles upon which matting or skins were stretched as protection against rain and snow. A vaulted corridor leads one into other rooms of similar proportions which possibly served as granaries. The remains of a stairway directly to the right of the main entrance takes one to the upper ramparts along which sentries indubitably paced.

The most amazing room at Shahr-i-Zohak is, however, that entered by a door to the right of the group described above. Here the visitor who has seen the Buddhist grottos will be struck by the sight of a square room, the trumpet-like squinch in the angle of each corner, with familiar shaped niches in the walls supporting a cupola upon a drum. Some Islamic architect must have been impressed indeed by the work of his predecessors.

Continuing toward the western edge of the cliff one finds a house with fancy architectural decor and beside it to the right a confused maze of walls to one of which is attached a trough. One might infer from this that these were perhaps the stables. The view from this spot down the Bamiyan Valley is lovely.

The buildings in the 1st and 3rd stages offer little of particular interest, the latter having been the residential quarters of the fortress where warehouses, bakeries, kitchens

and rooms can be identified. It has been estimated that 500 soldiers were stationed here in time of peace but that the fort could accomodate from two to three thousand men.

From this high peak one looks south onto the Koh-i-Baba, north onto the Hindu Kush, west down the Bamiyan Valley, and below upon nature's palette in the cliffs: magenta, violet, purple, yellow and dark green.

SAR KHOSHAK

Situated 21 miles and one hour to the northeast of Bamiyan in the Shikari Gorge. - Take the Shibar Pass route to the fork, turn left proceed through the Gorge toward Doab for 6 miles, 10 kms. - Can be visited only when the river is low enough to cross unless approached from the other side by horse from Bamiyan: a long but impressive ride. Magnificent view.

This impressive fortress which dominates the left bank of the Bamiyan River was an important segment of the defense network so carefully planned by the Islamic kings of Bamiyan. The Shikari Gorge, where the road follows the river at the bottom of a canyon so narrow and deep that the cliffs seem to close above, is an exciting experience in itself.

The fortress, strategically placed at a point where the gorge widens just a little, is built, as was Shahr-i- Zohak, on two distinct levels on a rocky point high above the river, an administrative city comprised of palace, mosques and residential quarters hugged the lower half of the hill while the citadel rose above. A long belt of ramparts which

are in amazingly good condition surrounds the whole. Again, as in Shahr-i- Zohak, the placement of the round towers in the thick wall of the rampart indicates the original entrance.

Sar Khoshak carried out its important tasks until downed by the fury of Genghis Khan who was first sighted by the defenders of this fortress as he surged on toward Shahr -i- Gholghola to fulfill his curse.

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